Veer Gaatha

Stories of
Param Vir Chakra Awardees

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Veer Gaatha

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Param Vir Chakra Awardees

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Cover: Frontline troops of the Indian Army fighting in Kasur sector during the 1965 War

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Foreword

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has developed this book, *Veer Gaatha: Stories of Param Vir Chakra Awardees* in the honour of those who fought against all odds to safeguard the honour of our nation.

Veer Gaatha is a memoir of war heroes who will be remembered forever for their indomitable courage, dedication to duty and undying love for the motherland. This book is a collection of stories of great icons of the Indian armed forces who have been awarded the *Param Vir Chakra*. The award is the highest military decoration and it stands for the highest degree of conspicuous gallantry, supreme courage, leadership, exemplary devotion to duty and self-sacrifice in wartime.

War as we know is the largest man-made catastrophe affecting humankind. But there is a bigger question, i.e., can we avoid war? Perhaps there is no certain answer to this question, but we should surely not glorify wars if wars do not entail the message of peace. The sincere tribute to our war heroes, some of whom laid down their lives for a noble cause, will be to ensure that peace and harmony prevail. Reading these stories will give you an opportunity to engage with history and take a stand on what the present should entail — *war or peace forever!*

The stories that follow are inspiring and instructive. They will give the reader insights into our "*Param Virs*", the bravehearts, their disciplined and determined characters and their commitment to responsibility. We are sure that you will be motivated to imbibe their sterling qualities and carry forward the glorious tradition set by them.

Let us remind ourselves that the time has come that we resolve our conflicts amicably and rise as members of one human family.

Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training

New Delhi
15 January 2016

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Preface

The Constitution of India states that the State shall endeavour to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honourable relations between nations, foster respect for international law and encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration.

However, circumstances required independent India to engage in wars and conflicts with Pakistan in 1947-48, 1965, 1971, 1987, 1999 and with China in 1962. The armed forces were also called upon to serve in the peacekeeping operations in nations such as DR Congo (1960-64) and Sri Lanka (1987-90). The personnel of all services sacrificed immensely to achieve the goals of national security and honour at home and abroad. This handy book comprises inspiring stories of the 21 bravehearts who were awarded the Param Vir Chakra (PVC), India's highest wartime gallantry medal, for their service to the nation. Until now, only 21 war heroes were awarded the PVC since 1947. Out of them, as many as 14 were awarded the PVC posthumously and 16 took part in India's wars and conflicts with Pakistan alone.

The PVC Awardees hail from a wide range of socio-economic and educational backgrounds. While some come from the defence families, most are from other walks of life. While half of them are officers, the other half belong to JCOs/NCOs/Jawans. These heroes may belong to different communities, regions, services, regiments, units, ranks, age groups and different periods of post-Independence history of India. But what is common to all of them is the feeling of patriotism and the display of the highest level of valour on the battlefield. Symbolising the ethos and values such as devotion to duty, esprit de corps, honesty, honour, non-discrimination, and spirit of selfless sacrifice, they lived up to the motto: "One for all and all for one". This is what is reflected in each story.

The book introduces these outstanding patriots to young readers across the nation. Most of these readers may be termed as post-Kargil generation. Following a chronological order, the book provides snippets of military history of India since independence along with the stories of the PVC Awardees. Each story concludes with the citation, which describes valour of the Awardee. Readers can find out more print and audio-visual materials to know about the life and times of these awardees and about the wars and operations in which they took part and the leaders of those times. In these stories, it is neither intended to glorify the violence nor demonise the enemy.

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The safety, honour and welfare of your country come first, always and every time.

The honour, welfare and comfort of the men you command come next.

Your own ease, comfort and safety come last, always and every time.

– Credo of the Indian Military Academy (IMA)

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मुझे तोड़ लेना वनमाली
उस पथ पर देना तुम फेंक
मातृभूमि पर शीश चढ़ाने
जिस पर जावें वीर अनेक ।।

– माखनलाल चतुर्वेदी

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The works of many institutions and authors were immensely useful for our book. This is primarily based on secondary sources. We are especially beholden to Maj Gen Ian Cardozo (Retd) and Ms Rachna Bisht Rawat for their interesting chronicles of the PVCs and also for finding time to meet us.

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All efforts have been made to respect the copyright to the best of our knowledge. Inadvertent omissions, if brought to our notice, stand for correction in the reprint edition.

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About the Param Vir Chakra

Instituted on 26 January 1950, the first Republic Day, the Param Vir Chakra (PVC) is awarded for most conspicuous bravery or some daring or pre-eminent act of valour or self-sacrifice, in the presence of the enemy, whether on land, at sea, or in the air. The decoration may be awarded posthumously. It came into retrospective effect from 15 August 1947.

Literally, the Param Vir Chakra means 'Wheel (or Cross) of the Ultimate Brave'. In Sanskrit, Param means Ultimate, Vir (pronounced veer) means Brave and Chakra means Wheel.

Design of the Medal

Medal: Circular in shape, made of bronze, one and three eighth inches in diameter and on obverse, four replicas of **"Indra's Vajra"** with the State Emblem (including the motto), embossed in the centre. On its reverse, it shall have embossed Param Vir Chakra both in Hindi and English with two lotus flowers between Hindi and English. The fitting will be swivel mounting.

The PVC is the equivalent award of the "Victoria Cross" (VC) of the United Kingdom or the "Medal of Honor" of the United States of America.

Sources: http://indianairforce.nic.in
http://knowindia.gov.in

Designer of the PVC Medal

IA 421 Maj Gen Vikram Ramji Khanolkar and Mrs Savitri Bai Khanolkar on the day of their marriage at Lucknow

Mrs Savitri Bai Khanolkar designed the PVC Medal. She was born on 20 July 1913 in Switzerland as Eve Yvonne Maday de Maros. She met Cadet Vikram Ramji Khanolkar who was visiting Switzerland during a term break from the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, UK. They fell in love and married later. Subsequently, she changed her name to Mrs Savitri Bai Khanolkar.

Mrs Khanolkar was chosen to design the medals owing to her in-depth understanding of Indian culture and her artistic skills. Besides designing the PVC, she designed the major Gallantry Medals for both war and peace, namely Ashok Chakra (AC), Maha Vir Chakra (MVC), Kirti Chakra (KC), Vir Chakra (VrC) and Shaurya Chakra (SC)! She also designed the General Service Medal–1947, used until 1965. Interestingly, her daughter Mrs Kumudini Sharma's brother-in-law, Maj Somnath Sharma, was posthumously awarded India's first PVC, in the Battle of Badgam in 1947. Mrs Khanolkar passed away on 26 November 1990.

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Abbreviations

2/Lt	Second Lieutenant
A Company	Alpha Company
ADGPI	Additional Directorate General of Public Information
AOC-in-C	Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief
APS	Army Postal Service
B Company	Bravo Company
Bde	Brigade
Bn	Battalion
Brig	Brigadier
C Company	Charlie Company
CAP	Combat Air Patrol
Capt	Captain
CHM	Company Havildar Major
CO	Commanding Officer
Col	Colonel
Coy	Company
CQMH	Company Quarter Master Havildar
D Company	Delta Company
Fg Offr	Flying Officer
Flt Lt	Flight Lieutenant
FOC-in-C	Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief
Gen	General
GOC-in-C	General Officer Commanding-in-Chief
GR	Gorkha Rifles
HMG	Heavy Machine Gun
HQ	Headquarters
IAF	Indian Air Force
IMA	Indian Military Academy
IPKF	Indian Peacekeeping Force
JAK LI	Jammu & Kashmir Light Infantry
JAK RIF	Jammu & Kashmir Rifles

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JCO	Junior Commissioned Officer
L/Nk	Lance Naik
LMG	Light Machine Gun
LoC	Line of Control
Lt Col	Lieutenant Colonel
Lt Gen	Lieutenant General
Lt	Lieutenant
LTTE	Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam
Maj Gen	Major General
Maj	Major
MMG	Medium Machine Gun
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NCC	National Cadet Corps
NCO	Non-commissioned Officer
NDA	National Defence Academy
NEFA	North East Frontier Agency
OBE	Order of the British Empire
PAF	Pakistan Air Force
PoW	Prisoner of War
PVC	Param Vir Chakra
RCL	Recoilless
Regt	Regiment
RMS	Rashtriya Military School
Retd	Retired
UN	United Nations

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A Saga of Heroism...

India-Pakistan War 1947-48

Indian soldiers during the 1947-48 war

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1947–the advent of independence left scars of boundaries as the land and people were divided into India and Pakistan.

The war of 1947-48 was significant in many ways. It broke immediately after the birth of two nations after a long struggle for freedom; no sooner the euphoria of attaining freedom had subsided the issues of nursing a nation of people of wounded psyche emerged; at this juncture the war siren came as a bolt from the blue.

Nearly 550 Princely States were offered to choose and join either of the countries. Most of the rulers selected the country that was nearer to their own. Some chose to be independent. The Ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, chose to stay independent. An arrangement by the name 'Standstill Agreement' was signed, which ensured the continuity of the present administrative system till a new agreement came into being. Both the countries were appealed to restrain from putting any administrative pressure until the public opinion is expressed. However, but in spite of signing the agreement, in order to capture Kashmir, Pakistan within a few months of independence, along with some Pathan tribal clans, ex-servicemen, fugitive soldiers and Pakistani troops started intruding into independent Kashmir.

In October 1947, the guerrillas (armed tribesmen) attacked the bordering villages. Initially, the state army fought fiercely but soon they realised that they were fewer in comparison to the guerrillas. And then Maharaja Hari Singh appealed to India for help. Prime Minister, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru agreed to help on the condition that the agreement of merging the state of Jammu and Kashmir with India will be signed first. As that was the only legal way by which the Indian Army could enter Jammu and Kashmir. It was a long and bloody war. The soldiers captured some parts of Kashmir during that time. Jhangar, Rajouri, Kargil, Tithwal and a few other places were later recaptured. Later, in 1949, the ceasefire was officially announced with the intervention of the United Nations.

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The Indian soldiers fought courageously and were honoured with various gallantry awards. In this war, there were many brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives. Five of them were awarded the Param Vir Chakra for exceptional bravery and self-sacrifice. Maj Somnath Sharma, Naik Jadunath Singh and CHM Piru Singh lost their lives in battlefield. They were honoured with this award posthumously. 2/Lt Rama Raghoba Rane and Lance Naik Karam Singh were two soldiers who received this honour in person.

There are many unsung heroes of war and common people who laid down their lives for the country we are living in. We can hear the sagas of their valour blowing in the wind and we can smell it in the aroma of the soil of our motherland. There were some who stand tall as figures of indomitable courage; it is for their sacrifice that we can breathe in a free country. Do you know who these people were? Come, let us rewind to have a feel of their lives and spend some time with them!

"Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die."

– Lord Tennyson Alfred

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1

Somnath Sharma

Battle from Sunrise to Sunset – 3 November 1947

Maj Somnath Sharma raised his head with a twinkle in his eyes. His plastered hand rested near the bunker. He looked at the sun which would gradually be moving towards the west. Every second of his life was a challenge now. He was ready to outrun the sun now but there was no tension, the rising morning sun was welcomed; his face was beaming and spirited in anticipation of laying his life for the glory of his country.

Hence, after getting the secret information that a group of about a thousand Pathans (armed tribals), led by the Pakistani army, aided and abetted by Pakistan, was heading towards Srinagar. Troops of A and D Company of 4 Kumaon led by Maj Somnath Sharma and 1 Para Kumaon commanded by Capt Ronald Wood were sent to Badgam, a small town located close to the Srinagar airfield. According to the reports, the motive of the Pathans led by the Pakistani army was to capture Srinagar airbase, to cut supplies, and to make the Indian Army ineffective. But the troops led by Maj Somnath Sharma were assigned the responsibility of finding the infiltrators and keep them engaged.

Early in the morning, as per Maj Sharma's report, his company had taken position and dug trenches on a hill, west of the village. 1 Para Kumaon had also taken position in the southeast of the village, and according to them the village was calm and dead silent. The villagers were busy with their work but seemed scared and frightened. They saw that a few villagers had gathered near a *nala* (water body) as if they had taken refuge there. Because the village

seemed quiet, 1 Para Kumaon was instructed to take a round of the East and go back to airbase after getting in touch with 1 Punjab. They followed the orders and came back and reached Srinagar at 1 pm. The situation in Badgam was under control, so Maj Somnath was ordered to remove his company from there although he preferred to keep the company in Badgam till the evening.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the border, the Lashkar (group) was accumulating in small units, to avoid suspicion. Their leader was a Pakistani Major who was planning to dodge the Indian soldiers, patrolling the area. It was a big and well-thought plan. Around 2 pm, when the A company had left the area, Pakistani Major decided to wait no more, and as soon as around 700 infiltrators accumulated, he attacked. At around 2.30 pm, Maj Somnath was stunned to see bullets being fired from the village. He informed the brigade that their position was under attack and that they were apprehensive that their retaliation can prove to be fatal for the women and children present in the village. Till then more infiltrators had reached there from the hillside. The soldiers, who had survived, later told that Maj Somnath was rushing from one trench to another, boosting their morale and motivated them to fight with full courage. The courage and determination of the soldiers made the initial attacks by the enemy unsuccessful.

But the strength of the Pakistani Pathans was large and making full use of this, they started putting more pressure by increasing their number further. Soon they surrounded the D company from three sides and started climbing the hill where the trenches were located. Maj Somnath knew that his troops were meagre in comparison to the enemy. He asked the brigade commander to send arms and ammunition and extra soldiers. To keep the enemy engaged till reinforcements arrived was a big challenge. He was aware that if not engaged for considerable period of time, the infiltrators can reach and capture the Srinagar airbase. He knew that his company will not be able to stop the enemy for long, so it was a challenge for him

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to keep up his soldier's will power. And, hence, he was in the open battlefield ignoring his own safety but boosting the morale and will power of his soldiers.

The fight continued like this for five hours. This was very precious time for the Indian Army because by keeping the invaders engaged was actually giving the Indian Air Force enough time to bring reinforcements to the field.

Finally, their ammunition finished. When they informed the brigade, the brigade asked them to fall back. After getting the orders, Maj Somnath went to another trench to help a soldier load his gun, in the meantime a mortar shell came and fell on an ammunition box. There was a big explosion. Along with Maj Somnath Sharma, his orderly and a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) lost their lives.

The Indian Army retaliated with full force and captured Badgam in the early hours of 5 November. But 4 Kumaon lost their bravehearts – Maj Somnath Sharma, Subedar Prem Singh Mehta and 20 soldiers. Maj Somnath Sharma was awarded the Param Vir Chakra for exemplary leadership and gallantry in fighting and capturing the Indian post back.

Unforgettable Moments

Even after having a wounded plastered arm, Maj Somnath Sharma insisted on going to Kashmir front… perhaps, challenging his destiny competing with death. Amidst death and destruction, Lance Naik of D coy Balwant Singh did something very courageous; when most of the soldiers were left with just one or two rounds of ammunition, he told his men to move on and prepare for another action, Balwant Singh, risking his life attacked the invaders. Due to this intelligent and benevolent act of D coy, the invaders were delayed by about 6 hours. This time was enough for the Indian army to take position and to stop them from reaching the airfield. The aircrafts were also helping the troops. They were ready to face the attacks.

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Somi to Major Somnath

Maj Somnath was born on 31 January 1923 in District Kangra. His father, Amarnath Sharma, a Medical Corps officer, reached the rank of Major General in his service. Somnath was known as Somi as a child. His brother who was also an army officer was called Tindy in the army circles. When Tindy was 4 years old, their father was sent to England for a medical course. Hence, both the brothers were sent to Hampton Court Convent, Mussoorie. Bullied by the seniors at such a tender age, Somi who was taller and broader than Tindy became his protector. Somi had no interest in studies except in history and general knowledge. The brothers had an agreement that Somi would protect Tindy from the bullies of the school and Tindy would do the homework which Somi would later copy in the morning.

They also did their further studies together. They studied together in Sherwood College, Nainital. He was enrolled in the Prince of Wales Military College (now Rashtriya Indian Military College), Dehradun because of his strong desire to join the army. After passing out from there in 1941, he joined the Indian Military Academy (IMA). The war had started by then and the military training programme at the IMA had to be stopped in between. In February 1942, after nine months of vigorous training, Maj Somnath Sharma was commissioned in 8/19, Hyderabad Regiment (which later came to be known as the 4th Battalion, Kumaon Regiment). He was merely 19 years old then.

Maj Somnath returned to India as an adjutant in 4 Kumaon and picked up his duty to ensure the internal security of Punjab. He also helped the police and administration to control the unrest of 1947. These qualities enabled him to lead his company during the unrest created by Pakistani infiltrators in Kashmir. The Commanding Officer (CO) of 4 Kumaon was not ready for Somi's movement but ultimately giving in to his persistence, the CO agreed upon sending him. He was given the responsibility of leading 2 Kumaon companies. This story is often repeated in army messes and books. It is a story of pride and courage.

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Once a Soldier, always a Soldier

Somnath was in Arakan, where he saw deadly combat with Japan during the Second World War on the coast of Arakan. Three Indian battalions had fought alongside British Commando Battalion in this war. Once during the action, Maj Somnath saw a wounded Kumaoni soldier sitting beside a tree. When Somnath asked him to run, he replied that he was unable to stand due to his wound. Somnath picked him up and carried him on his back through the Japanese shelling, to a safe place.

Rashtriya Indian Military College (RIMC), Dehradun, is the alma mater of Maj Somnath Sharma.

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Citation

Major Somnath Sharma (IC-521), 4 Kumaon

On 3 November 1947, Major Somnath Sharma's company was ordered on a fighting patrol to Badgam in the Kashmir Valley. He reached his objective at first light on 3 November and took up a position south of Badgam at 1100 hours. The enemy, estimated at about 500 attacked his company position from three sides, the company began to sustain heavy casualties.

Fully realising the gravity of the situation and the direct threat that would result to both the aerodrome and Srinagar if the enemy attack was not held until reinforcements could be rushed to close the gap leading to Srinagar via Humhama, Major Sharma urged his company to fight the enemy tenaciously. With extreme bravery, he kept rushing across the open ground to his sections exposing himself to heavy and accurate fire to urge them to hold on.

Keeping his nerve, he skilfully directed the fire of his sections into the ever-advancing enemy. He repeatedly exposed himself to the full fury of enemy fire and laid out cloth strips to guide our aircraft onto their targets in full view of the enemy.

Realising that casualties had affected the effectiveness of his light automatics, this officer whose left hand was in plaster, personally commenced filling magazines and issuing them to the light machine gunners. A mortar shell landed right in the middle of the ammunition resulting in an explosion that killed him.

Major Sharma's company held on to its position and the remnants withdrew only when almost completely surrounded. His inspiring example resulted in the enemy being delayed for six hours, thus gaining time for our reinforcements to get into position at Humhama to stem the tide of the enemy advance.

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His leadership, gallantry and tenacious defence were such that his men were inspired to fight the enemy by seven to one, six hours after this gallant officer had been killed.

He has set an example of courage and qualities seldom equalled in the history of the Indian Army. His last massage to the Brigade Headquarters a few moments before he was killed was, "*The enemy are only 50 yards from us. We are heavily outnumbered. We are under devastating fire. I shall not withdraw an inch but will fight to the last man and the last round.*"

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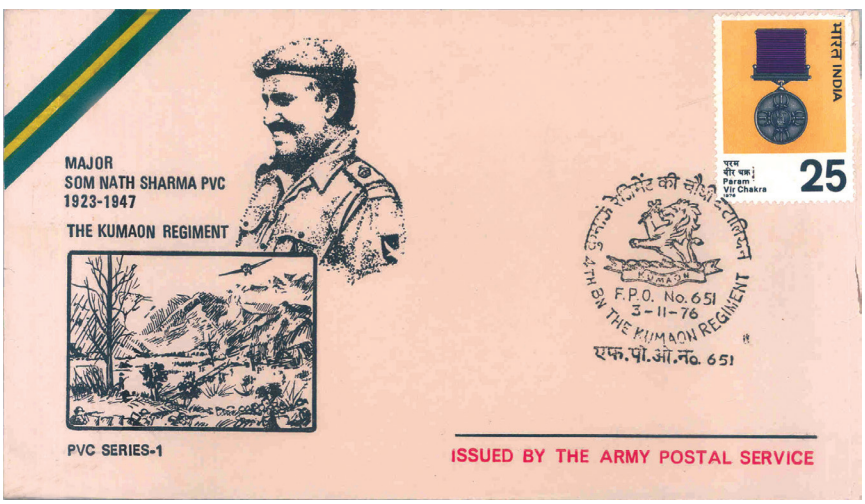

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2

Jadunath Singh

Legacy of Valour

This is the story of a soldier who lived and died for the country. Jadunath Singh was born on 21 November 1916 in Khajuri, a small village in Uttar Pradesh. His parents, Birbal Singh Rathore and Jamuna Kanwar, were poor farmers. They had a large family of eight children. Jadunath passed out from the village school after completing class four. He was good at wrestling and physical activities.

As a young boy, Jadunath was active, religious and disciplined. At the age of 25 years, he joined the Rajput Regiment at Fatehgarh. After completing his training, he was posted at 1st Battalion of the Rajput Regiment. His senior officers observed in him the sparks of leadership and courage. He fought in World War II. On his return, Jadunath was promoted to the rank of Naik, and he was given the command of a section of troops.

It is said among the army circles that much information about Jadunath is not available since he did not marry and his relatives could also not be located. But what remains of the war hero Jadunath is the legacy of bravery and matchless qualities of leadership which will never fade from the pages of history of our country.

Fury of the Battle – 6 February 1948

As you have already read, the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir did not want to be a part of India immediately after India gained its independence. But it was also not possible for the erstwhile Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir to become self-sufficient in all aspects. He agreed to accede to India when raiders from Pakistan attacked Kashmir since he had no preparedness to fight the invaders.

The Battalion, 1 Rajput was given the orders to march to Naushera for fighting the invaders. The battalion was divided into three posts. One of them was Taindhar, which is said to be the most conspicuously located as invaders had no other way but to pass Taindhar. The battalion had reached there on 8 December 1947.

Naik Jadunath, the hero of Taindhar post received information that Pakistani raiders were planning an attack. He had meagre resources and few men at his disposal. It was early morning of 6 February 1948, Jadunath could see amidst the mist and fog that invaders were approaching; true it was, huge in numbers and armed with weapons. It seemed that those moments froze for Jadunath for a fraction of second. He rose and collected all of his nine men and commanded them to take positions. There were invaders popping up from all sides. They were marching ahead with ferocity.

Jadunath and his men flung hand grenades at them but that was not enough. It was like a pinch of salt in the sea of fighters and weapons. It is recorded that at one point of time they entered the trenches and had hand-to-hand combat.

Amidst the fury of the battle, four men of Jadunath's force were injured. Havildar Daya Ram, a non-commissioned officer, rose to the occasion, putting his life at risk he started firing mortars, but at a very close range. It could have hurt him and the Indian soldiers. But his strategy actually saved the Indian post from a greater destruction. Jadunath had received serious bullet injuries. He was unable to stand and walk. Brave to the hilt, he dragged himself, took a gun from a wounded soldier and fought till he was left with no ammunition. This was not saying adieu. He grabbed a sword from the invaders and fought till he was shot dead. These are not the snapshots of his bravery alone, but of him being a leader as well; Jadunath's feats of bravery inspired his men to fight till they lost their lives. We might also say that this was a tribute of brave soldiers to their leader Jadunath who exhibited matchless courage in fighting the invaders. Jadunath did not let the invaders take his post till he breathed last. He was awarded the Param Vir Chakra posthumously.

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Citation

Naik Jadunath Singh (No. 27373), 1 Rajput

At No. 2 picket on Taindhar on 6 February 1948, No. 27373 Naik Jadunath Singh was in command of a forward section post which bore the full brunt of the enemy attack. This little post was garrisoned by nine men against overwhelming odds. The enemy launched his attack in successive waves and with great ferocity to overcome this post. The first wave swept up to the post in a ferocious attack. Displaying great valour and superb qualities of leadership, Naik Jadunath Singh so used the small force at his disposal that the enemy retired in utter confusion.

Four of his men were wounded but Naik Jadunath Singh again showed his qualities of good leadership by reorganising the battered force under him for meeting another onslaught. His coolness and courage were of such an order that the men rallied and were ready for the second attack which came with greater determination and in large numbers than the preceding one. Though hopelessly outnumbered, this post under the gallant leadership of Naik Jadunath Singh, resisted. All were wounded, and Naik Jadunath Singh, though wounded in the right arm, personally took over the bren-gun from the wounded bren-gunner. The enemy was right on the walls of the post, but Naik Jadunath Singh once again showed outstanding ability and valour of the highest order in action. By his complete disregard for his personal safety and example of coolness and courage, he encouraged his men to fight. His fire was so devastating that what looked like impending defeat was turned into victory and the enemy retired in chaos leaving the dead and wounded littered on the ground. With this act of supreme heroism and outstanding example of leadership and determination, Naik Jadunath Singh saved the post from the second assault.

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By this time, all men of the post were casualties. The enemy put in his third and final attack in undiminished numbers and determination to capture this post. Naik Jadunath Singh, now wounded, prepared literally single-handed to give battle for the third time, and with great courage and determination, he came out of the *sangar* and firing sten-gun, made a most magnificent single-handed charge on the advancing enemy, who completely taken by surprise, fled in disorder. Naik Jadunath Singh, however, met his gallant death in his third and last charge by two bullets hitting him in the head and chest. Thus, charging single-handed at the advancing enemy, this Non-Commissioned Officer, performed the highest act of gallantry and self-sacrifice and by so doing, he saved his section – nay his whole picket from being overrun by the enemy at the most critical stage in the battle for the defence of Naushera.

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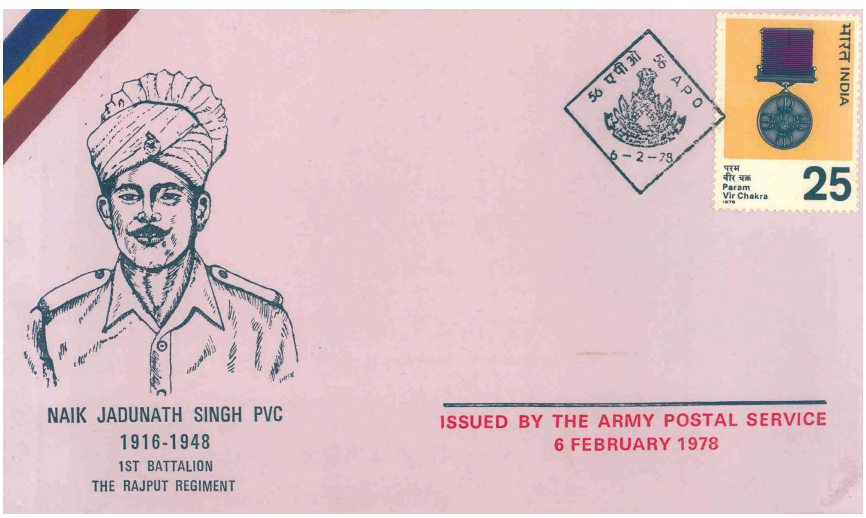

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3

Rama Raghoba Rane

Becoming a Soldier

Rama Raghoba Rane was born in a family belonging to Maratha community. They later on settled in South India. He served in the army for about 21 years and got five Mention-in-Despatches. Apart from the India-Pakistan war of 1947-48, he was also a part of Burma war during the World War II. It is sometimes mentioned that he even shot down an enemy aircraft with a medium machine gun.

He was born on 26 June 1918 in the Chendiya village of Karnataka where his primary education took place. His father was in the police, which was a transferable job. Rane also kept moving with his parents. Hence, his studies took place in different parts of the country. A soldier is also a sportsman by heart and so was Rane.

He joined the army during the World War II at about 22 years of age. He was commissioned in Bombay Sappers in July 1940. He remained in 37 Field Company till 1950 and thereafter got posted to Bombay Engineers Group Centre. He was awarded the Param Vir Chakra for his valour during the 1947-48 war. But it didn't end here. He was honoured with a citation by the Chief of the Army Staff during the Kashmir Mahaprabhu Mela. He retired on 25 June 1968. But he kept working with army till 1971. He still and will always hold a special place in the army as well as in our hearts.

In the Heart of a Soldier

There was much excitement in Shivaji High School, Sadashivgarh, Karwar taluka, that day. 2nd Lt Rama Raghoba Rane was being felicitated for winning the highest gallantry award of the country. The programme began with a chorus of girls singing a *swagat geet*. Leela was one of the singers and she gave it her best.

As an embarrassed Rane looked on, his eyes fell upon a beautiful girl in a sari. She was singing sweetly, with all her heart, looking with awe at him. The moment he saw her, he felt she was the one he wanted to spend the rest of his life with and lost no time in expressing this desire to her family.

Leela was only 19 then. Rane was a national hero and though there was an age difference of more than 15 years between the two of them, her family was only too happy to accept him as their son-in-law. On 3 February 1955, the two got married.

Source: Rachna Bisht Rawat, *The Brave*: *Param Vir Chakra Stories*

Making Way for Victory – 10 April 1948

Just beneath the Stuart tank and inside a tunnel a man was crouching. He was trying to follow the sound and speed of the tank while crouching inside the tunnel. He was badly injured and could barely move himself. But still he was dragging himself forward ceaselessly. This soldier was Rama Raghoba Rane, who was awarded the Param Vir Chakra in his life time. Pakistani soldiers had wreaked havoc with their loot, and killings in Rajouri. Hence, it was imperative for Rane and his soldiers to reach Rajouri as soon as possible. They were ordered to clear minefields and roadblocks for tanks to pass through. Each passing second brought death and humiliation for the innocent residents whereas, every step taken by Rane and his soldiers was a promise of new life to the residents of Rajouri.

The journey to Rajouri was not easy. They were under attack from every direction. Rane used the tank as cover and made his way to Rajouri by digging a tunnel and crawling through it. Suddenly Rane saw a round pit, which was a landmine. Up till now, these men

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signalled the moving or stopping of the tank by pulling ropes. Once again they pulled the rope in their right hand and started digging the landmine. They were covered with mud. Carefully they removed the lid, defused the dynamite, and put the lid back. The rope in their left hand was pulled signalling the tank to move ahead.

A Miraculous Journey till Rajouri

The party waded through waters as high as 10 feet. The soldiers were exhausted and hungry in this endeavour but they had not stopped to eat, for they did not want to lose time. They kept moving forward, only eating *shakkarpare* (a sweet made of sugar and refined flour). They had to reach their destination – Rajouri. And they did reach, bringing new hope for the people of Rajouri.

The path was not an easy one. Two of Rane's mates had been killed – Ambaji More and Raghunath More. Sitaram Suthar and Kishan Ambre were badly injured. They also succumbed to their injuries eventually. Lance Naik M. K. Jadhav was hit by a bullet in his spine. He was incapacitated for life. Rane's thigh was also injured and bleeding badly. But after bandaging it, he started moving again. Rane and his regiment succeeded in making Pakistani soldiers to recede.

In the morning, fighting all the adversities and making way, they kept moving forward. They had reached Chingas by 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Rane kept working on clearing the routes till 9 o'clock at night. The tanks could pass through them now. But the route ahead was more arduous. When the news of massacre reached the soldiers, they started working with even greater speed. The big rocks near the river were blown up with dynamite. Many times the tank had to be moved inside the river water. They reached Rajouri in the morning on 12 April. Rajouri was devastated. It was a miracle that the Indian army managed to save many lives. Rane and his party had given a new life to Rajouri. All the refugees started returning to their respective villages. Rane was awarded the Param Vir Chakra for his bravery and his devotion to duty.

This brave soldier endured every injury on duty, cleared every obstruction and solved every difficulty. As the destiny would have it, later, 73-year-old Rane succumbed to bleeding during a surgery in 1994. Even his wife's love could not save him this time.

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Citation

Second Lieutenant
Rama Raghoba Rane
(SS-I4246), Bombay Engineers

On 8 April 1948, 2/Lt Rama Raghoba Rane, Bombay Engineers, was ordered to be in charge of the mine and roadblock clearing party on the 26 miles road from Naushera to Rajouri, which passes through very hilly country.

At 1100 hours, on that date near Nadpur South, just as 2/Lt Rane with his party was waiting near the tanks to start work to clear the mines ahead, the enemy started heavy mortaring of the area, with the result that two men of the mine-clearing party were killed and five others wounded including 2/Lt Rane. This officer at once reorganised his party and started work for the tanks to go on to their position. Throughout the day he was near the tanks under heavy enemy machine-gun and mortar fire.

After the capture of Barwali Ridge at about 1630 hours, although knowing that the enemy had not been completely cleared of the area, this officer took his party ahead and started making a diversion for the tanks to proceed. He worked on till 2200 hours that night in full view of the enemy and under heavy machine-gun fire.

On the 9th, he again started work at 0600 hours and worked on till 1500 hours when the diversion was ready for the tanks to proceed. As the armoured column advanced, he got into the leading carrier and proceeded ahead. After advancing about half a mile, he came across a roadblock made of pine trees. He at once dismounted and blasted the trees away. The advance continued. Another 300 yards and the same story was repeated. By this time, it was getting on to 1700 hours. The road was curving round the hills like a snake. The next road block was a blasted away culvert. 2/Lt Rane again got on with the job. Before he could start work, the enemy opened up

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with their machine-guns, but with superb courage and leadership he made a diversion and the column proceeded ahead. The roadblocks were becoming numerous but he blasted his way through. It was now 1815 hours. The light was fading fast. The carrier came across a formidable roadblock of five big pine trees surrounded by mines and covered by machine-gun fire. He started removing the mines and was determined to clear the roadblock but the armoured column commander appreciating the situation got the column into a harbour area.

On 10 April 1948 at 0445 hours, 2/Lt Rane started work on the road block in spite of enemy machine-gun fire with the support of one troop of tanks. 2/Lt Rane, with sheer willpower, cleared this roadblock by 0630 hours. The next thousand yards of the road was a mass of roadblocks and blasted embankments. That was not all. The enemy had the whole area covered with machine-gun fire but with superhuman efforts, in spite of being wounded, this officer with cool courage, exemplary leadership and complete disregard for personal life, cleared the road by 1030 hours.

The armoured column proceeded ahead and got off the road into the river bed of Tawi but 2/Lt Rane continued clearing the road for the admin column. The tanks reached Chingas by 1400 hours. 2/Lt Rane appreciating that the opening of the road was most vital, continued working without rest or food till 2100 hours that night.

On 11 April 1948, he again started work at 0600 hours and opened the road to Chingas by 1100 hours. He worked on that night till 2200 hours, clearing the way ahead.

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4

Piru Singh

Arduous Journey of a Soldier

Piru Singh was born on 20 May 1918 in Rampura Village, Churu, Rajasthan. They were seven brothers and sisters. As a child, he loved hunting, playing in the forest, working in the fields. Piru Singh was a born soldier. He disliked all bondages in his childhood. He disliked going to school. He left the threshold of school one day and never went back as if he had chosen his destiny, a path which was full of hardships.

He got enrolled in the army on 20 May 1936, at the age of 18. His training took place in Punjab and he was posted at Jhelum for training before being transferred to 5/1 Punjab. It was amazing that the boy who had no interest in studies, kept clearing all army examinations one after the other. He just took a year to become Naik from the rank of Lance Naik. He became a Havildar in 1945.

He also went to Japan to work with the Commonwealth occupational forces after the Second World War. The country was divided into two parts when he came back. He was sent to Rajputana Rifles thereafter.

When Pakistan attacked Kashmir along with Pathan tribesmen, Piru was sent to stop them. Here, he showed exemplary bravery and courage for which he was awarded the Param Vir Chakra. He became martyr at the age of 30, became an icon of bravery at a young age and he is still with us.

Darapari – 18 July 1948

Company Havildar Major (CHM) Piru Singh could neither look up nor look down at that moment. The sky was deep blue and the

nature was bathed in bright moonlight. But a soldier had no time to admire all this. They were surrounded by fear, awake and waiting in their trench. The path outside the trench was rough and stony and one could hardly walk. A single wrong move could prove to be fatal. These were Delta Company soldiers of 6 Rajputana Rifles, who were slowly moving towards Darapari, located in Tithwal sector of Kashmir at an altitude of 11,481 feet. They had information that the infiltrators were hiding somewhere near. They were tired but their morale was high. They looked at each other silently, a meaningful silence denoting inspiration, and also filled with nostalgia-reviving old memories, which lessened their fatigue. They remembered that a region of Kashmir was to be set free from Pakistani infiltrators. The soldiers were airlifted to Srinagar. That was the first air travel for most of the soldiers.

In that lethal war of April 1948, Pakistan had to face great loss. The Indian soldiers had captured a Pakistani post. The credit for this victory was given to Dhonkal Singh. Piru Singh remembered that how Dhonkal Singh had fought like a tiger in spite of an injured shoulder.

While Piru Singh remembered everything, he was not aware that the whole thing would repeat itself one day with him. He moved forward remembering his mate with a lot of respect. He was at an altitude of 10,264 feet at Nastachun Pass. They were at Kafir ridge point which was captured by Pakistani soldiers, and they were supposed to reach at Baniwala Dana ridge in 24 hours. There was a small river between Kafir Khan ridge and Baniwala Dana ridge. A team of engineers started building a bridge on the river at night. But they did not succeed which forced Piru Singh and his mates to create a passage through the river with wooden logs. They reached the area on 12 July 1948 and captured the opponent's location in the morning. Thereafter, they moved towards another location. The location of Darapari had to be captured under any circumstances. On 18 July, the battalion attacked the sharp ridge of Darapari.

When they reached there, Piru Singh and his mates were not aware that the Pakistani soldiers had built five bunkers from where they could monitor the movements of Indian soldiers. When the

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Indian soldiers moved forward, they were volleyed with grenades which caught them by surprise. It was a cold winter night and the path was narrow. India lost fifty-one soldiers. It was difficult to understand the situation or be sure of the next move. This was when Piru Singh exhibited exceptional courage. The opponent thought that their victory was certain. But Piru Singh wisely kept moving with the forward most Section of the Company dodging the bullets fired at him. The cries of his mates filled him with determination and forced him to move faster as if he was alive to avenge his mates. The opponent was not ready for this. Piru Singh bayonetted a Pakistani soldier's operating machine gun. Suddenly, the opponent's machine gun and his breathing — both were calm.

Suddenly, Piru Singh realised that he was all alone. All his mates were either killed or wounded. But he kept on shouting, calling for life. He went to another bunker and was attacked with a grenade. But a grenade thrown at him badly wounded his face and he was in a state of semi-consciousness.

With spectacular will power, he hurled grenades at opponent's bunker. Suddenly, the Pakistani bunker became very quiet. There was a big explosion. Now Piru Singh began to become aware of his wounds. He was becoming unconscious. And thus, the dauntless warrior took his last breath.

Piru Singh was awarded the Param Vir Chakra posthumously. His unit, 6 Rajputana Rifles, commemorates the 'Battle Honour of Darapari' every year in remembrance of this brave soldier.

Honouring the War Hero – Pandit Nehru's letter to Piru Singh's mother

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, in his letter to Piru Singh's mother (Tarawati Kanwar) wrote "He paid with his life for his singularly brave act, but he left for the rest of his comrades a unique example of single-handed bravery and determined cold courage. The country is grateful for this sacrifice made in the service of the Motherland, and it is our prayer that this may give you some peace and solace."

Source: Rachna Bisht Rawat, *The Brave*: *Param Vir Chakra Stories*

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Citation

Company Havildar Major Piru Singh
(No. 2831592)
6 Rajputana Rifles

South of Tithwal, D Company, of which No. 2831592 Piru Singh was Havildar Major, was detailed to attack and capture an enemy occupied hill feature. The enemy had well dug in positions and had sited his MMGs so as to cover all possible approaches. As the attack advanced, it was met by heavy MMG fire from both flanks. Volleys of grenades were hurled down from enemy bunkers. CHM Piru Singh was then with the forward most Section of the Company.

Seeing more than half of the Section killed or wounded, he did not lose courage. With battle cries, he encouraged the remaining men and rushed forward with great determination onto the nearest enemy MMG position. Grenade splinters ripping his clothes and wounding him at several places, he continued to advance without the least regard to his safety. He was on top of the MMG position wounding the gun crew with sten gun fire. With complete disregard to his bleeding wounds, he made a mad jump on the MMG crew bayoneting them to death, thus silencing the gun.

By then he suddenly realised that he was the sole survivor of the Section, the rest of them either dead or wounded. Another grenade thrown at him wounded him in the face. With blood dripping from his face wounds into his eyes, he crawled out of the trench, hurling grenades at the next enemy position.

With a loud battle cry, he jumped on the occupants of the next trench, bayoneting two to death. This action was witnessed by the C Company Commander, who was directing fire in support of the attacking Company.

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As Havildar Major Piru Singh emerged out of the 2nd trench to charge on the 3rd enemy bunker, he was hit in the head by a bullet and was seen dropping on the edge of the enemy trench. There was an explosion in the trench, which showed that his grenade had done its work. By then CHM Piru Singh's wounds had proved fatal.

He had paid with his life for his singularly brave act, but he had left for the rest of his comrades a unique example of single-handed bravery and determined cold courage.

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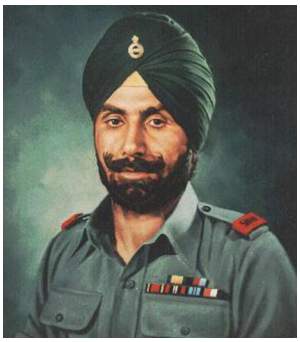
5

Karam Singh



Journey of a Soldier

'Dushman nedhe si. Assi tinn see, tey chautha tu – hun ki kariye? ('The enemy is near, we are three, you are the fourth, now what should we do?'). When a soldier said this to Karam Singh, his trousers were soaked in blood. He and his companions had countered the first Pakistani attack. But there was another attack again, and only four of them were left. Their ammunition was also not enough. It was not possible to get the ammunition immediately. The enemy was much larger in number. They saw the Pakistani soldiers advancing towards their outpost. Their fellow soldiers were shot. The same bullets were also splintering the rocks and the pieces of those rocks were wounding the soldiers. But the bullets could not break the morale of the soldiers, who were as strong as an immovable rock. Karam Singh took out a hand grenade and shouting *'Jo bole so nihaal, Sat Sri Akaal'*, threw it in the air.

The Pakistani soldiers lost control due to the explosion. *'Jado assi ithe jaan de dange tan saadi keemat wadh javegi'* (if we give our lives here then our value will increase). Karam Singh said this in a loud and thundering voice which was full of confidence and lifted the morale of the soldiers.

The grenade was like a ball for sportsman Karam Singh that he had tossed in the opponent's court. He clean bowled the opponent with yet another explosion and kept moving forward and pushing the opponent backwards.

There were many attacks from the Pakistani soldiers to recapture the post. In spite of his grave injuries, not only did Karam Singh keep his courage but also kept boosting the will power of his fellow soldiers.

That day Pakistan attacked for the fifth time at about 1 o'clock in the afternoon, this was when Karam Singh created history.

This is the story of soldier Karam Singh who was born on 15 September 1915. It was during this time the whole world was experiencing the aftermath of the First World War. His father, Sardar Uttam Singh, was a farmer from Sahna village. Young Karam Singh loved playing and working in the fields. He was not much interested in studies at school but sports was his forte. He always stood first in sports competitions in high jump and pole vault. He got married to Gurdial Kaur in the early 1950s and was blessed with two children – a boy and a girl. He joined the Indian Army on 15 September 1941. His sportsmanship and qualities of being conscientious and being hard-working took him to the rank of Honorary Captain.

Upright and conscientious warrior for justice

"In the early 60s, Karam Singh was in the Sikh Regimental Centre at Meerut. He was asked to buy sugar for the soldiers from a local mill and was doing that when someone brought to his notice that the sacks of sugar were being soaked in water to increase their weight. A furious Karam told the mill that he would not accept any wet sacks. The mill owner, who was a corrupt but well-connected man, had an argument with Karam. When Karam stuck to his stand the mill owner pushed him physically and threatened him saying he had connections in Delhi.

The hot-headed Karam had reached the end of his patience. He beat up the mill owner. The case was reported and since the mill owner had connections in high places, Karam was dismissed from service as punishment for manhandling a civilian.

Not one to take injustice lying down, Karam went to Delhi with his war medals and sought an interview with the President. It was granted. When he explained to the President what had transpired, he was immediately reinstated in service."

Source: Rachna Bisht Rawat, *The Brave*: *Param Vir Chakra Stories*

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Spectacular Victory – 13 October 1948

On 13 October 1948, at about 6 in the morning, the enemy was marching towards 1 Sikh regiment with the motive of capturing it. Till now, Karam Singh and all his fellow soldiers had made unsuccessful attacks and had realised that it was difficult to face enemy standing for long as they were all badly wounded. They decided to join the main company. They carried with them their two severely wounded soldiers in spite of the heavy shelling of guns and mortar.

At about 10 in the morning, there was another attack. This time the attack was on the main company. Again, even though injured, Karam Singh kept fighting even after the bunkers were destroyed. He kept moving from one bunker to another, boosting the willpower of his fellow soldiers. They were all badly injured.

At about 6 in the morning, and under fierce attack, none of them had time to think about their own wounds. Even then, Karam Singh was only concerned about his fellow soldiers. During the attack, the Pakistani soldiers had come so close to the bunker that it had become difficult to counter-attack and to save the fellow soldiers at the same time. And so Karam Singh fitted a bayonet on his gun and jumped out of the bunker. Karam Singh kept attacking and moving forward. The enemy was shocked by such bravery and sudden defence. They had lost courage and gave up by the evening. They slowly started receding. By then Karam Singh's company had rebuffed 8 attacks, which 1 Sikh had successfully countered. They had endured heavy losses, but their spirit was intact. Maj Gen K. S. Thimayya later called it a unique spectacular victory. It was called a unique victory because every new step, every effort was directed to win the war. For this unique devotion to duty and bravery, Karam Singh was awarded the Param Vir Chakra. He was awarded one more gallantry award earlier for his courage and bravery, while fighting for the British army in Burma.

When India became independent on 15 August 1947, Karam Singh was one of the five soldiers selected to hoist the flag with the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He died as

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an Honorary Captain in 1993. But Karam Singh's feats of courage, bravery, camaraderie and his stand for justice will always remain alive in the hearts of the people of our country.

President Dr Rajendra Prasad presenting the PVC to Lance Naik Karam Singh

Lance Naik Karam Singh with Gen K. M. Cariappa, the First Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army

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Citation

Lance Naik Karam Singh (No. 22365), 1 Sikh

Tithwal in Jammu and Kashmir was captured on 23 May 1948. After that date, the enemy made numerous attempts to recapture Richmar Gali, and thence Tithwal. On 13 October 1948, coinciding with Id, the enemy decided to launch a brigade attack to retake Richmar Gali, and bypassing Tithwal, advance into the Srinagar Valley. Lance Naik Karam Singh was commanding a section at Richmar Gali.

The enemy commenced its attack with heavy shelling of guns and mortars. The fire was so accurate that not a single bunker in the platoon locality was left unscathed.

Communication trenches caved in. Bravely, Lance Naik Karam Singh went from bunker to bunker, giving succour to the wounded and urging the men to fight.

The enemy launched eight separate attacks that day. In one such attack, the enemy managed to obtain a foothold in the platoon locality. Immediately, Lance Naik Karam Singh, who was severely wounded by then, with a few men, hurled himself in a counter-attack and evicted the enemy after a close quarter encounter which accounted for many enemy dead, having been despatched by the bayonet.

Lance Naik Karam Singh proved himself to be a dauntless leader of men in crisis. Nothing could subdue him and no amount of fire or hardship could break his spirit.

His gallant actions on that day inspired his colleagues to face the massive onslaught unflinchingly. It was his fiercely proud spirit which was largely responsible for the gallant stand at Tithwal that day.

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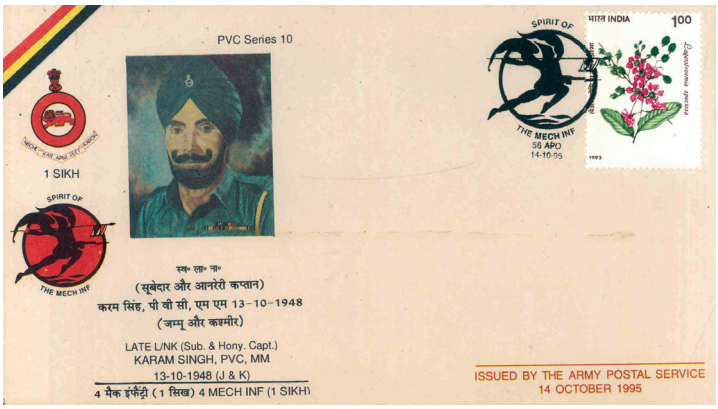

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A Saga of Heroism...

Congo Operation
1961

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UN Peacekeeping Operation in Congo

Congo, which was earlier called Zaire, is now called the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo). Just as India was a colony of Britain, Belgian Congo (in central Africa) was a colony of Belgium. It won Independence on 30 June 1960. However, soon after the Belgians withdrew, the country was engulfed by political instability marked by civil war and corruption. The unity and integrity of the newborn nation were threatened by mutiny in army and violent secessionist movements, especially in its mineral-rich province of Katanga. Congo appealed for urgent military assistance from the United Nations (UN).

The United Nations Operation in Congo (Opération des Nations Unies au Congo, or ONUC) lasted from July 1960 to June 1964. The objectives of the ONUC included ensuring the withdrawal of Belgian forces; maintaining law and order; preserving the territorial integrity and political independence of Congo; preventing civil war; and removing all foreign military personnel not under the UN Command, and all mercenaries. Elizabethville (now Lubumbashi), in Katanga, became the Headquarters of the UN Command (see map). This is located in the conflict-ridden south-eastern part of the country.

In November 1961, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution to stop the violent activities of the Katangese rebels against the Central Government of Congo and the UN personnel. The UN decision incensed Moise Tshombe, Katanga's secessionist leader, and he retaliated by intensifying his 'hate the UN' campaign.

India joins the UN Operation

This happened during the Cold War era. The anti-colonial struggles were also taking place in different regions of the world. It is in these trying circumstances that Indian troops were inducted into the UN Operation. India has been a staunch supporter of the UN, right from its birth and has been regularly contributing troops to the UN peacekeeping operations all over the world. For the UN Operation in Congo, India deputed a brigade of around 3,000 men. Let us now read about a courageous son of India who sacrificed his life during this operation.

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6

Gurbachan Singh Salaria

Born on 29 November 1935, in village Jamwal near Shakargarh (now in Pakistan), Gurbachan lived through the crisis of India-Pakistan partition which changed the map of the land and the destinies of the people. His parents were Munshi Ram and Dhan Devi. His family moved to India and settled in village Jangal, near Dinanagar, District Gurdaspur, Punjab. His father served in the armed forces. Hence, the courage and sense of duty towards the nation filled his being and he grew up with dreams of serving his nation one day in the army.

He joined the King George Royal Indian Military College (now Rashtriya Military School), Bengaluru in 1946. Later he moved to the King George Royal Indian Military College, Jalandhar (now Rashtriya Military School, Chail, Himachal Pradesh). By dint of hard work, he gained entry into the National Defence Academy (NDA). But he had to appeal for financial assistance to continue his education (see letter). He later joined the Indian Military Academy (IMA) and was commissioned into the 1 Gorkha Rifles in 1957.

Capt Gurbachan Singh Salaria, an epitome of courage, was part of the Indian contingent for the UN Operation in Congo. His battalion, 3/1 Gorkha Rifles, was deployed in Elizabethville to safeguard the UN Headquarters and its personnel. On 5 December 1961, Capt Salaria with his small force of 16 Gorkhas embarked on a risky mission. They were on the way to remove roadblocks set up by rebels near the airfield. But soon they faced stiff resistance from a large number of rebels armed with automatic weapons and armoured carriers. Despite a clear and present danger to his life, he decided to go ahead with this task.

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To

The Ministry of Defence,
Government of India,
NEW DELHI.

Through :-

The Deputy Commissioner,
Gurdaspur District,
GURDASPUR
(Punjab)

Sir,

Subject :- FINANCIAL AID TO THE CADETS SELECTED FOR TRAINING AT THE JOINT SERVICES WING OF NATIONAL DEFENCE ACADEMY, DEHRA DUN

I have been selected for training as Cadet at the Joint Services Wing, National Defence Academy, Dehra Dun, after completing my educational career at the King George's School, NOWGONG, previously at JULLUNDUR.

My father is a Havildar Pensioner possessing a very small holding of land at village NOWSHEHRA NALBANDAN Tehsil Pathankot. He has a large family to support and he cannot therefore afford to support me at the Academy. I have no other source and I therefore request your honour to secure me the financial aid allowed under Government of India, Ministry of Defence letter No. F.130/49/D.1(a), dated 1 Nov '49.

For this kindness I shall be grateful to you.

Yours faithfully,

Gurbachan Singh Slaria

(GURBACHAN SINGH SLARIA)
S/o
Hav.Pensioner Munshi Ram
Village NOWSHEHRA NALBANDAN
Tehsil PATHANKOT

Dated
10 Jan '53

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Leading his men with the Gorkha war cry, *Jai Mahakali, Ayo Gorkhali!* (Victory to Mahakali, the Gorkhas are here!) Capt Salaria launched a deadly assault on the enemies. The motto of the Gorkha Rifles is: '*Kafar hunu bhanda marnu ramro*' (It is better to die than to be a coward). His moves on the battlefield were fully guided by this motto. He attacked the enemies ferociously and eliminated many of them rapidly in a close combat. The enemy force soon got disintegrated owing to a sustained assault launched by him and his men. In spite of severe wounds, he fought valiantly until the very end.

Capt Salaria sacrificed his life for a noble purpose, for people of the world. He fought against violent secessionists and helped save the UN headquarters in Congo. He attained martyrdom at the age of 26 in a faraway land for protecting India's honour at the UN. For his supreme sacrifice in the line of duty, he was awarded the Param Vir Chakra posthumously. He became the first and the only one to be awarded the PVC while serving in a UN peacekeeping operation.

Paying homage to the portrait of Capt G. S. Salaria during the disembarkation of 3/1 Gorkha Rifles from the USS General R. M. Blatchford *on their return from Congo, Bombay, April 1962*

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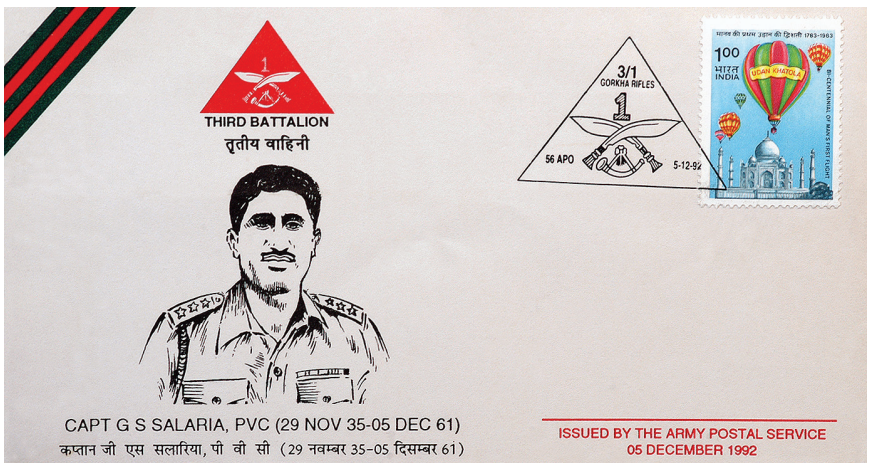
Two Indian brigades participated in this UN operation between 1960 and 1964. Thirty-six Indian personnel laid down their lives and 124 personnel were wounded. Sadly, various armed conflicts still rage in the DR Congo more than five decades since that fateful day in 1961! Was it a lost cause then? Not necessarily. The legacy of Capt Salaria continues to inspire all those who devote their lives to peacekeeping operations around the world.

Capt Gurbachan Singh Salaria's selfless service reflects the motto of the Rashtriya Military Schools, that is, *Sheelam param bhushanam* (Character is the highest virtue). The Salaria Square in the NDA is an everlasting tribute to his valour. A stadium along with a park was set up by the 14 Gurkha Training Centre at Subathu, Himachal Pradesh, as a tribute to Capt Salaria. The Army Postal Service issued a Special Cover on 5 December 1992 to honour him.

Bust of Capt Salaria at RMS, Bengaluru

Bust of Capt Salaria at RMS, Chail



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Citation

Captain Gurbachan Singh Salaria (IC-8497), 3/1 Gorkha Rifles

On 5 December 1961, 3/1 Gorkha Rifles was ordered to clear up a roadblock established by the gendarmerie at a strategic roundabout at Elizabethville, Katanga. The plan was that one company with two Swedish armoured cars would attack the position frontally and Captain Gurbachan Singh Salaria with two sections of Gorkhas and two Swedish armoured personnel carriers would advance towards this roadblock from the airfield to act as a cutting-off force.

Captain Salaria with his small force arrived at a distance of 1500 yards from the roadblock at approximately 1312 hours on 5 December 1961 and came under heavy automatic and small arms fire from an undetected enemy position dug in on his right flank. The enemy also had two armoured cars and about 90 men opposing Captain Salaria's small force.

Captain Salaria appreciating that he had run into a subsidiary roadblock and ambush and that this enemy force might reinforce the strategic roundabout and thus jeopardise the main operation, decided to remove this opposition. He led a charge with bayonets, *khukris*, and grenades supported by a rocket launcher. In this gallant engagement, Captain Salaria killed 40 of the enemy and knocked out the two armoured cars. This unexpected bold action completely demoralised the enemy who fled despite their numerical superiority and protected positions.

Captain Salaria was wounded by a burst of automatic fire in his neck but continued to fight till he collapsed due to profuse bleeding. Captain Salaria's gallant action prevented any movement of the enemy force towards the main battle scene and thus contributed very largely to the success of the main battalion's action at the roundabout and prevented the encirclement of UN Headquarters in Elizabethville. Captain Salaria subsequently died of his wounds.

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Captain Salaria's personal example, utter disregard for personal safety, and dauntless leadership inspired his small but gallant force of 16 Gorkhas to hold on to their position, dominate the enemy and inflict heavy casualties despite the enemy's superiority in numbers and tactical position.

Captain Salaria's leadership, courage, unflinching devotion to duty and disregard for personal safety were in the best traditions of our Army.

Gazette of India Notification
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Salaria Square, National Defence Academy

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A Saga of Heroism...

India-China War
1962

An Indian sentry stands guard at a mountain pass in 1962

Indian troops on the outskirts of Chushul during the 1962 War

The war between India and China had been resting in bygones. The causes of conflict might appear to us today as trivial in terms of the fact that both the countries hold high opinion about peaceful ways of resolving issues, still the war was fought and left an indelible print in the history of the world. One of the causes of the war was Aksai Chin, which China started claiming as part of Xinjiang in their territory. The tension with China was further compounded when due to Tibet's internal turmoil Dalai Lama was given asylum in India. The war with China erupted unexpectedly for India; there was least preparedness on the part of India. But what stood out spectacularly was undaunted courage and commitment to duty as displayed by the brave and dedicated Indian Army. Let us read about the heroic deeds of the Param Vir Chakra Awardees — Dhan Singh Thapa, Joginder Singh and Shaitan Singh. And also reflect on the need of propagating the message of peace more effectively.

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7

Dhan Singh Thapa

Dhan Singh Thapa was born on 10 April 1928 at Shimla in Himachal Pradesh. He was commissioned into 1/8 Gorkha Rifles on 28 August 1949. He was a brave soldier who displayed undaunted courage and wisdom during the Chinese attack in 1962. He was posted at Sirijap Post 1 in Ladakh region with meagre resources and a few soldiers. The terrain was rough and nature too was harsh at the time of battle. But nothing stopped him to fight fiercely with the Chinese soldiers.

Dhan Singh Thapa is also remembered for his humane qualities. He was an unassuming, humble and a religious person. He played football with passion. He displayed true team spirit both at playing field and battlefield.

Dhan Singh Thapa was awarded the Param Vir Chakra for his conspicuous fighting qualities while in command at a forward post in Ladakh.

He even had to fight hand-to-hand in the course of fighting. He was badly injured and while trying to douse the fire he was caught in, he was taken by the Chinese soldiers as a prisoner of war along with a few others.

Battle at Sirijap 1, Ladakh Region

In 1962, Sirijap 1 was established as an army post to safeguard the Indian border from the Chinese. China had been strengthening their posts in Ladakh. There were only 28 soldiers posted at Sirijap 1. The soldiers were split in many posts at Ladakh. The fierce battle took place in the Chushul sector of Ladakh at Sirijap 1 post. The post lies on the northern side of the Pangong Tso. Soldiers

of Delta Company, 1/8 Gorkha Rifles, were vigilant and ready to counter-attack at any moment while performing their patrolling duties.

The Chinese planned their battles shrewdly with strategies of shocking the enemy, attacking them when they are least prepared. The night at Sirijap post was terribly stormy. The fight did not ensue the night when soldiers were awake and ready for it, perhaps it proved to be a blessing in disguise for those who were not on duty because they could take some rest for another unpredictable day. It was the lull before the storm.

It was 19 October when Maj Thapa found that there was lot of activity at the Chinese camp. Probably they were planning to attack Sirijap post. It was time to prepare for the war, to defend themselves, true to their tradition of not initiating the war. Maj Thapa and the soldiers, handful in number, waited anxiously throughout the night ready to fight back and defend themselves if the occasion arises. Those might have been the moments, which had made them realise the unpredictable flow of time, and along with it reminded them of the sanctity of the promises they made to their motherland.

As early as 6 a.m. on 20 October, there was an attack of mortars and bomb explosions. There were cries of pain. There was utter devastation at Sirijap 1 camp. Soldiers were killed and wounded, worst came when the radio network was disrupted. Signal Officer Maj Ved Vyas, fondly recollected the last message he received from Maj Thapa who adamantly conveyed that he would neither withdraw nor surrender. It was the moment that immortalised him a war hero. Maj Thapa painfully watched his soldiers dying, wounded, and not in position to fight but he kept them inspired to fight back. Maj Thapa and his soldiers were quick enough to prepare for their defence. The terrain was rocky and difficult to dig, so they decided to pile up sand bags to erect bunkers for taking positions. Maj Thapa kept boosting their morale by telling them that though they are few in numbers but one Gorkha is equivalent to ten soldiers when it comes to fighting.

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Here the soldiers marched fearless. The freezing temperature and biting cold outside the trenches did not deter them from retaliating against their opponents.

Subedar Min Bahadur Gurung, the Company Second-in-Command was injured, but he rose from debris where he was buried after the bomb explosion, fought bravely with his light machine gun (LMG). Maj Thapa saw another soldier who was badly wounded who ran into the tent leaving behind his rifle. Maj Thapa picked up his gun, rushed inside, patted him on the head and said, what is called to be a soldier to soldier talk: *'Kafar hunu bhanda marnu ramro' (*It is better to die than to be a coward). These are not mere words uttered but resonated the highest ideals of bravery in battle. The wounded soldier took his rifle and marched forward to fight.

It was the time to act bravely, thoughtfully; resources were few, soldiers were even less in numbers. Maj Thapa picked up a rifle lying by the side of a dead soldier and rushed into the trench to take command of the fight. He positioned himself in front of the advancing enemy who were in overwhelming numbers.

The shelling went on for a long time and Sirijap turned into an inferno. Chinese soldiers took advantage of the smoke that erupted all around and moved closer to Sirijap post. Gorkha soldiers braved the attacks. Their weapons could not withstand the attacks of sophisticated Chinese ammunition.

What is important in the war is not the show of machinery but the show of courage, grit, devotion to the cause, love for motherland and determination to fight till the end. Battle for Sirijap 1 in Ladakh is an example of extraordinary valour shown by Maj Dhan Singh Thapa. There were many brave soldiers who were deeply inspired by Maj Thapa, their Company Commander. They were running short of bullets so they picked up the rifles of dead fellow soldiers and retaliated. Chinese soldiers started using incendiary bombs to smoke out soldiers from trenches. Suddenly, there was a war cry, *Jai Mahakali, Ayo Gorkhali.* Gorkha soldiers attacked Chinese soldiers fiercely with *khukris*, their traditional knives. Maj Thapa was one of the last few who were left.

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Victory is the only sought after end of the battle, defeat is humiliation but in war, there is not only victory and defeat, it is the courage, bravery, dedication of the soldiers that stand above the final outcomes. These ideals are synonyms of soldiers fighting for their country.

Maj Thapa was taken as captive by the Chinese soldiers. Nobody in his battalion knew about this. He was believed to have been killed in war. He was awarded the Param Vir Chakra 'posthumously'. However, it was found soon after that Maj Thapa along with the survivors of Sirijap post were taken away by the Chinese, first to Khurnak Fort, later on to Sinkiang as Prisoners of War (PoWs). Maj Thapa was in Chinese captivity till May 1963. He was subjected to torture. Chinese officers tried to erase from Maj Thapa's memory the picture of his motherland by instigating rumours against Indian Government who they said was not interested in his release. But every dark cloud has a silver lining. Maj Thapa befriended a boy who used to bring food for him in the prison. He told him about his family in India and about his wife who was expecting a baby when he had left for war. One day he, with the help of the boy, posted a letter to his family. This was a turning point in his life, the family informed the army authorities and Maj Thapa was freed from Chinese captivity through inter-governmental negotiations.

Maj Dhan Singh Thapa with his cadets at the IMA, Dehradun

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It was an emotional family reunion. His wife Shukla, who in her heart of hearts never believed that he was dead, on seeing him alive, was ecstatic with joy. His two daughters, Pamela and Madhulika, were delighted to be reunited with their father. His son, Param Deep, was just born. True to the tradition of the soldier, his son also joined the army.

Maj Thapa served the army and rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He did not talk much about the war and days of captivity. His youngest daughter, Poornima, was born after her father came back from the war. She fondly remembers how her father attended the Republic Day Parades from 1964 to 2004, even though, during 2004, he had been suffering from kidney ailment. It was on 5 September 2005, Lt Col Thapa passed away at the age of 77.

We salute him for his bravery and dedication to the Indian army.

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Citation

Major Dhan Singh Thapa (IC 7990), 1/8 Gorkha Rifles

Major Dhan Singh Thapa was in command of a forward post in Ladakh. On 20 October, it was attacked by the Chinese in overwhelming strength after being subjected to intensive artillery and mortar bombardment. Under his gallant command, the greatly outnumbered post repulsed the attack, inflicting heavy casualties on the aggressors. The enemy attacked again in greater numbers after heavy shelling by artillery and mortar fire. Under the leadership of Major Thapa, his men repulsed this attack also with heavy losses to the enemy.

The Chinese attacked for the third time, now with tanks to support their infantry. The post had already suffered large casualties in the two earlier attacks. Though considerably thinned, it held out to the last. When it was finally overrun by overwhelming numbers of Chinese, Major Thapa got out of his trench and killed several of the enemy in hand-to-hand fighting before he was eventually overpowered by Chinese soldiers and killed.

Major Thapa's cool courage, conspicuous fighting qualities and leadership were in the highest traditions of our Army.

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8

Joginder Singh

This is a story of another war hero who was not shaken even for a moment when he saw huge battalion of enemy approaching him. Joginder Singh stood as a pillar to affront the attack on his men. Let us read another story of bravery and inspiration.

Joginder Singh was born on 28 September 1921 in Mahakalan, a small village in Moga district of Punjab. He was keen to continue his education in school but could not do so because his parents were poor and could not afford to pay his school fees and other expenses. Perhaps destiny had marked for him a special and honourable task – he joined the Indian Army. He was a hardworking soldier and passed his professional examinations to become a unit instructor. He commanded respect from the troops for being a strict disciplinarian and a dedicated soldier.

Joginder Singh fought bravely as a soldier. He was awarded the Param Vir Chakra for fighting with Chinese troops at Bum La, Tawang in the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) in 1962. Joginder Singh sacrificed his life for the country.

Bum La, Tawang, North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), 1962

A fierce battle was fought at Tongpen La, near Bum La, Tawang in 1962. This area earlier known as the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) is now the state of Arunachal Pradesh. The bugle of war was sounded unexpectedly for some of the soldiers who were participating in sporting events. War was imminent; the basketball tournament at Lucknow was cancelled. Soldiers were told to join their battalion at

NEFA. 1 Sikh regiment was also called from Jaipur. It was an arduous but memorable journey for the soldiers; crossing the jungles to Tenga valley, winding paths of Bomdila and a climb down to Dirang, to the frozen Sela lake and finally to Tawang. The picturesque surroundings of Arunachal Pradesh must have been a source of solace to the soldiers to experience peace and beauty of the nature.

They had to fight a war. Subedar Joginder Singh was the platoon incharge. He was a strong man and about to retire from the army. He was highly respected in the battalion for his discipline and exemplary fighting skills which he had shown during the World War II and the 1947-48 war with Pakistan. Joginder Singh was a seasoned soldier who could see that there were only 29 soldiers; they did not have adequate warm clothing and modern fighting equipments. In such circumstances, he knew that they could fight this war with sheer courage and wisdom. So he kept their morale high and remained a pillar of inspiration for them till the end.

The preparation to fight began. They started digging trenches. the Assam Rifles soldiers and paramilitary forces that were there started moving back, making way for Subedar Joginder Singh and his battalion to take over.

On 20 October, Chinese attacked another Indian post, Namkachu and made way to Tawang where Joginder Singh and his men were. Once again Chinese forces had started to build bunkers and were getting ready to attack. Joginder Singh called up his soldiers and told them about the probability of attack from the Chinese soon.

It was on 23 October 1962 at 5:30 a.m. when preparations were on in the army kitchen for tea, the Chinese attacked the Tawang post. 1 Sikh stood ready for the counter-attack. They fought fiercely and the enemy was taken aback. There were many casualties on their side. However, in no time the enemy had unleashed another attack with more energy and troops. The battlefield resounded with the war cry, *Jo bole so nihaal, Sat Sri Akaal*. Joginder Singh handled the counter-attack on Chinese with courage and patience. He knew there were very few soldiers on his side. Arms and ammunition were scarce. In this situation, it was more important to keep the morale of the soldiers

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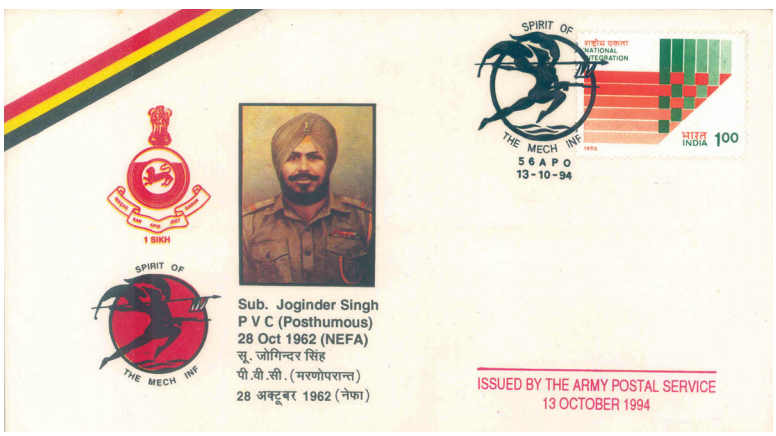
high. He reminded them that being in the battlefield, they have to prove themselves as worthy soldiers of their motherland. Joginder Singh was badly injured but still he attacked with his light machine gun. Joginder's encouraging words to his soldiers were not wasted, Sikh soldiers fixed bayonets on their guns and with a renewed energy charged the enemy camp shouting *'Jo bole so nihaal, Sat Sri Akaal'*.

Subedar Kala Singh who was very close to Subedar Joginder Singh, reminisced the scene of the battlefield. He said Chinese were amazed to see the sight of courageous Sikh soldiers – with their flowing beards, though small in number but daring to attack them. Joginder Singh led his men to fight Chinese soldiers. Battle was fought with grit, energy and dedication by Indian soldiers. Joginder Singh kept the fighting spirit of his men ignited till he fell down, badly injured, covered under the blanket of snow.

Joginder Singh did not die, a soldier never dies...true! Joginder Singh was taken away by the Chinese as prisoner of war – he never returned.

Subedar Joginder Singh was awarded the Param Vir Chakra for devotion to duty and inspiring leadership and bravery of highest order.

As a mark of respect to the brave soldier, Chinese returned his ashes once they came to know about the Param Vir Chakra being awarded to him.



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Citation

Subedar Joginder Singh (JC 4547), 1 Sikh

Subedar Joginder Singh was the commander of a platoon of the Sikh Regiment holding a defensive position at a ridge near Tongpen La in NEFA. At 0530 am on 23 October, the Chinese opened a very heavy attack on the Bum La axis with the intention of breaking through to Tawang. The leading battalion of the enemy attacked the ridge in three waves, each about 200 strong. Subedar Joginder Singh and his men mowed down the first wave, and the enemy was temporarily halted by the heavy losses it suffered. Within a few minutes, a second wave came over and was dealt with similarly. But the platoon had, by then, lost half its men.

Subedar Joginder Singh was wounded in the thigh but refused to be evacuated. Under his inspiring leadership, the platoon stubbornly held its ground and would not withdraw. In the meantime, the position was attacked for the third time. Subedar Joginder Singh himself manned a light machine-gun and shot down a number of the enemy. The Chinese, however, continued to advance despite heavy losses. When the situation became untenable, Subedar Joginder Singh and the few men left in the position fixed bayonets and charged the advancing Chinese, bayoneting a number of them before he and his comrades were overpowered.

Throughout this action, Subedar Joginder Singh displayed devotion to duty, inspiring leadership and bravery of the highest order.

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9

Shaitan Singh

This is the story of Shaitan Singh, another hero of India-China War. Unlike his name, he was soft spoken and disciplined as a child; but like his name he fought fiercely with Chinese soldiers and brought laurels to the country.

Major Shaitan Singh, 13 Kumaon

Shaitan Singh was born on 1 December 1924 at Banasar, a small village in Jodhpur district of Rajasthan. His father, Lt Col Hem Singh, was awarded the OBE after he fought in France during the World War I. Shaitan Singh was inspired to join the army by his father who brought laurels to the country. As a young boy, Shaitan was interested in sports. He studied at the Rajput High School, Chopasni in Jodhpur. Shaitan was a serious student with pleasing manners. He played for forces and the Durand Cup of football in India. He completed his qualification and joined the Jodhpur Lancers that was a Horse squadron. Later on, state Forces were merged with the Indian Army, and Shaitan Singh joined the Kumaon Regiment. A humble and quiet person—Shaitan Singh was a brave soldier par excellence. Shaitan Singh was disabled by wounds in arms and abdomen during the Chinese attack at Rezang La, an Indian post in Ladakh.

War should bring peace for the sake of the heroes of war who laid down their lives, for their families, countrymen and coming generations who would cherish their memories, acts of valour which are immortalised in history. The India-China war in 1962

was a glorious spectacle of our soldiers' bravery and valour. It was a battle which was fought at Rezang La in Ladakh by the soldiers of Charlie Company, 13 Kumaon. Maj Shaitan Singh was the commander of this company. Unfortunately, this battle was fought by the soldiers without their officers and their comrades having any information about it. The soldiers fought valiantly, with meagre resources. Their cries of war, pain and suffering, calls for help echoed in the mountains, and lonely forests but failed to reach their comrades.

Rezang La – The Battle and the Fury

It was 18 November 1962 at Rezang La, the day was colder than usual. The Chinese soldiers chose the early hours of the morning – 3:30 am, to attack the Indian camp. The sound of their light machine guns was audible amidst the calm and quiet surroundings.

Maj Shaitan Singh immediately enquired through the radio set the situation at Platoon 8; they informed that enemy had tried to disrupt their communication system but had not succeeded. Platoon 8 was also ready to attack the enemy if they tried to attack their post. Maj Shaitan Singh took hold of the situation and advised his men to be vigilant. He ordered his men to patrol the gullies. And there it was, Chinese forces were climbing through the gullies towards the Indian post. They were in huge numbers. Maj Shaitan Singh realised that it was time to keep the morale of the soldiers high. He reminded them that they were brave *Ahirs* so they must fight bravely. And they were true soldiers who promised to fight till their last. In the fight that ensued many Chinese soldiers were killed and those who survived ran away. The Chinese forces changed their strategy after this. They attacked all the posts together with deadly mortars and recoilless guns. The bunkers were destroyed. There was heavy casualty on the Indian side because our soldiers were few in numbers. Their old weapons were hardly a match to the modern weapons of the Chinese. Within 15 minutes of the attack, there was death and devastation all around.

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As if this was not enough, enemy brought more reinforcements on yaks and horses to attack. Maj Shaitan Singh rose to the occasion, he arranged for the first aid of injured Jawans; he kept his flock together and in high spirits. Amidst biting cold, Jawans could not cock their rifles — their fingers were frozen.

Maj Shaitan Singh was badly wounded in his stomach when he was hit in a machine gun-burst. The Maj was popular among his men and was warmly loved. CHM Harphul Singh grabbed an LMG and killed the soldier who had hit Maj Shaitan Singh. Though the soldier collapsed afterwards, yet he wanted that his comrades should not let Shaitan Singh fall in the hands of enemy. Shaitan Singh had lost a lot of blood. He was in a semi-conscious state with blood oozing from his ripped stomach. The wound was proving to be fatal. Soldiers took Shaitan Singh on their backs in turns but it did not seem possible for them to save him because the Chinese attacked them from all sides.

Maj Shaitan Singh knew that they would also lose their lives if they continued to carry him. He told them to leave him there and go ahead. To make sure that they do so he told them that it was his order. Shaitan Singh, even in his dying moments forced them to save their lives so that they could narrate a true account of the battle to their comrades, officers and people. Reluctantly, the soldiers moved on leaving behind their brave officer and friend.

In the same war, Nihal, another soldier from C Company was hit so badly with bullets that his arms were like just two limbs hanging on his sides. He managed to climb down the ridge unnoticed. But, someone had taken a note of him. It was the dog whom they fed and played-with in their camp. Nihal followed the dog blindly. He was noticed by the Indian post at Chushul and was taken care of. The war ended after the ceasefire was declared. Rezang La was declared as No Man's Land — a land that belonged to no country. Maj Shaitan Singh and some of his men lay frozen under the cover of snow on the land that did not belong to either country. A shepherd found them buried but living within them was the story of a war fought with fortitude and love for their nation.

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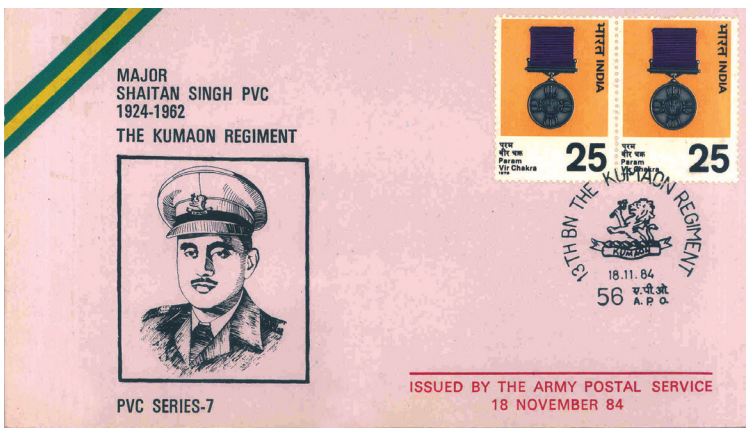
It was February 1963; the war with China had ended. It was by chance that a Ladakhi shepherd with his herd entered Rezang La in Chushul. It was a gory sight for him – an aftermath of a war. The place was strewn with dead soldiers; still holding their weapons. Their faces distorted, eyes staring in vacuum. It seemed to the shepherd as if those moments of war were frozen in time for eternity. He was horrified to see the carnage but he did not waste time and rushed to the nearest Indian Army picket. Indian Army lost no time in reaching to the site with the officials of Press Information Bureau. The bodies were recognised by their comrades. There were 113 bodies of soldiers who died fighting the battle. Five soldiers had been taken into captivity. Out of which, four reached back to their battalion. One soldier died as a Prisoner of War.

A memorial was built at Rezang La in the memory of these martyrs. Wild horses called 'kiangs', herds of blue sheep roam around the memorial as if keeping a vigil. Following lines by Lord Thomas Macaulay are inscribed on the memorial which is true to the bravehearts who sacrificed their lives so that we can sleep in peace.

How can a man die better than facing fearful odds,
For the ashes of his fathers and the temples of his Gods.

– Lord Thomas Macaulay



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Citation

Major Shaitan Singh (IC 6400), 13 Kumaon

Major Shaitan Singh was commanding a Company of an infantry battalion deployed at Rezang La in the Chushul sector at a height of about 17,000 feet. The locality was isolated from the main defended sector and consisted of 5 defended platoon positions. On 18 November 1962, the Chinese forces subjected the Company position to heavy artillery, mortar and small arms fire and attacked it in overwhelming strength and in several successive waves. Against heavy odds, our troops beat back successive waves of enemy attack. During the action, Major Shaitan Singh dominated the scene of operations and moved at great personal risk from one platoon post to another sustaining the morale of his hard-pressed platoon posts. While doing so he was seriously wounded but continued to encourage and lead his men, who, following his brave example, fought gallantly and inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. For every man lost by us, the enemy lost four or five. When Major Shaitan Singh fell disabled by wounds in his arms and abdomen, his men tried to evacuate him, but they came under heavy machine-gun fire. Major Shaitan Singh then ordered his men to leave him to his fate in order to save their lives.

Major Shaitan Singh's supreme courage, leadership and exemplary devotion to duty inspired his Company to fight gallantly almost to the last man.

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Aye Mere Watan Ke Logon (Oh, the people of my country!) is one of the most popular patriotic songs, commemorating Indian soldiers who died during the 1962 War. The song was written by Kavi Pradeep and the track was composed by C. Ramchandra. Lata Mangeshkar sang this song for the first time around the Republic Day in 1963.

ऐ मेरे वतन के लोगों, तुम खूब लगा लो नारा
यह शुभ दिन है हम सबका, लहरा लो तिरंगा प्यारा
पर मत भूलो सीमा पर, वीरों ने हैं प्राण गंवाये
कुछ याद उन्हें भी कर लो, जो लौट के घर ना आये

ऐ मेरे वतन के लोगों, ज़रा आँख में भर लो पानी
जो शहीद हुए हैं उनकी, ज़रा याद करो कुरबानी
जब घायल हुआ हिमालय, ख़तरे में पड़ी आज़ादी
जब तक थी साँस लड़े वो, फिर अपनी लाश बिछा दी
संगीन पे धर कर माथा, सो गये अमर बलिदानी
जो शहीद हुए हैं उनकी, ज़रा याद करो कुरबानी

जब देश में थी दिवाली, वो खेल रहे थे होली
जब हम बैठे थे घरों में, वो झेल रहे थे गोली
थे धन्य जवान वो अपने, थी धन्य वो उनकी जवानी
जो शहीद हुए हैं उनकी, ज़रा याद करो कुरबानी

कोई सिख कोई जाट मराठा, कोई गुरखा कोई मदरासी
सरहद पर मरनेवाला, हर वीर था भारतवासी
जो खून गिरा पर्वत पर, वो खून था हिंदुस्तानी
जो शहीद हुए हैं उनकी, ज़रा याद करो कुरबानी

थी खून से लथपथ काया, फिर भी बन्दूक उठाके
दस-दस को एक ने मारा, फिर गिर गये होश गंवाके
जब अंत समय आया तो, कह गये के अब मरते हैं
खुश रहना देश के प्यारों, अब हम तो सफ़र करते हैं
क्या लोग थे वो दीवाने, क्या लोग थे वो अभिमानी
जो शहीद हुए हैं उनकी, ज़रा याद करो कुरबानी

तुम भूल ना जाओ इनको, इसलिये कही यह कहानी
जो शहीद हुए हैं उनकी, ज़रा याद करो कुरबानी
जय हिंद, जय हिंद की सेना
जय हिंद, जय हिंद, जय हिंद

A Saga of Heroism...

India-Pakistan War
1965

Indian flag atop Haji Pir Pass

Indian soldiers mounting an intense attack in Sialkot sector during the 1965 War

You have read about the first war between India and Pakistan in previous pages. The war between India and Pakistan which was fought in 1965 is said to be the second Kashmir war. Both the wars brought misery and destruction. Kashmir, which is said to be the heaven on earth had become the bone of contention between the two countries. This war is famous for destruction of Patton tanks which were used by Pakistan. Our bravehearts fought the war courageously and cleverly to win. The Param Vir Chakra Awardees Abdul Hamid and A. B. Tarapore gave a befitting reply to advancing Pakistani soldiers. Let us read about this war which though ended in 1965 left the sparks for undying conflict in future.

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10

Abdul Hamid

This is the tale of bravery of Abdul Hamid who is remembered for his dexterity of shooting down the patton tanks in the war between India and Pakistan. It is interesting to know that had Hamid not joined the army he would have probably been working in his Abba's tailor shop. This would have deprived him of the opportunity to fight brilliantly for the country and earn the Param Vir Chakra. Abdul Hamid is fondly remembered in his hometown in Ghazipur as Vir Abdul.

Wars for territories have been fought since times immemorial; this can be testified from the history of human civilisation. These wars have been decried for death and destruction, and glorified as well for show of valour, might and pride soldiers take in fighting these wars. And hence, wars become important landmarks of a nation's history. One such war was fought in 1965 with Pakistan, our neighbour. It was the time when India as a nation was experiencing the joys as well as disappointments of making a nation.

Both the nations, India and Pakistan, were reborn after a long period of suppression and suffering which ironically resulted in an unending acrimony between the two nations.

There is a saying that man proposes and God disposes, it came true in 1965 when India and Pakistan fought another war, which the people of both the countries never wanted but wars are wars that are fought for the pride of the nation. Interestingly, the 1965 war can be described as culmination of the first war in 1947-48, which caused heavy casualty of Indian soldiers. Pakistanis mistook it as an

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opportunity to overpower India but to their great dismay, the Indian Army gave them a befitting reply under their mission which was named '*Asal Uttar*' (befitting reply) and rightly so. Abdul Hamid turned out as one of the heroes of this war.

Company Quarter Master Havildar Abdul Hamid, 4 Grenadiers

Abdul Hamid was born on 1 July 1933 in a small village, Dhamupur in Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh. He passed Class VIII examination and left school. Abdul was keen in taking part in physical activities like swimming, hunting, sword fighting. He used to spend time helping his father at his tailoring shop.

At the age of 20, Abdul joined army at Varanasi. He took training at the Grenadiers Regimental Centre at Nasirabad. After completing his training, he was posted at 4 Grenadiers in 1955. Abdul fought in the 1962 war in Thang La (NEFA) as a member of the 7 Mountain Brigade, 4 Mountain Division. After the war, he returned to Ambala and was appointed Company Quarter Master Havildar (CQMH).

Original RCL Jeep used during the Battle of Asal Uttar by CQMH Abdul Hamid, PVC

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Khem Karan Sector, 8 September 1965

Pakistan had barged into the Khem Karan sector in Tarn Taran district of Punjab with their Patton tank regiment. It was a call for Abdul Hamid to do his soldierly duty. He left his village, though against the wishes of his wife Rasoolan who considered, breaking of his bedding strap as Abdul was rolling up the holdall and buckling it, as a bad omen. She was worried and wanted him to leave the next day so as to ward off the bad omen. But none can stop a soldier, for him duty comes first.

Abdul started his journey to the field in the jeep fitted with recoilless (RCL) guns. They passed through the lush green sugar cane fields. Hamid decided that they would take positions in the groves of sugar cane on 9 September 1965. The strategy was to hit the Patton tanks with their recoilless guns. This required perfect timing and accuracy in shooting at the Patton tanks. Hamid asked his soldiers to shoot the moment the tanks came within 30 yards. As the first Pakistani tank came within their reach they shot with great precision blasting the tank. The Pakistanis on two more tanks ran away. This was the moment to rejoice for Abdul and his soldiers, as their strategy had caused least damage to their side.

The spree of victory continued. Abdul, the skilled marksman, hit three more tanks. Many Pakistani tanks were abandoned by their soldiers out of fear. The next day, 10 September, brought new challenges for Abdul. Pakistani tanks moved ahead strategically in the formation of threes. There was intense shelling from the side of Pakistanis and there was fire all around. Abdul hiding in vegetation changed his positions cleverly and successfully destroyed three more tanks. Abdul and the enemy came close to each other. Abdul moved his jeep to another position and told his crew to take cover. Suddenly, he found himself face-to-face with the next tank of the opponent. There was no time for Hamid to change his position and the enemy took full advantage of it.

It was the end of a glorious innings of a brave Indian soldier Abdul Hamid. Army sources confirm that it was for the first time in

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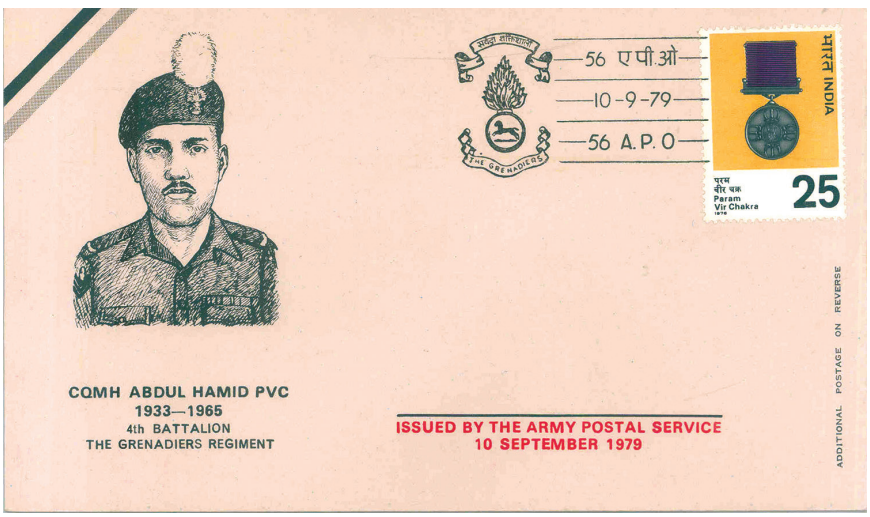
the history of the Indian Army that Abdul Hamid and his soldiers fought only with recoilless guns against heavily armoured regiment of the enemy.

Abdul Hamid died on 10 September 1965. He was awarded the Param Vir Chakra posthumously. The news that Hamid had destroyed four enemy tanks reached the officers at the Army Headquarters on 9 September 1965. This was mentioned in the citation. But there were officers, comrades who confirmed the glory of brave Abdul. According to them, he destroyed three more tanks on 10 September but this could not be amended in his citation.

This goes to the credit of 4 Grenadiers that they fought this intense war without its company commanders and specialist platoon commanders who were visiting Indo-Tibetan border as Advance Party. Abdul Hamid, who was Company Quarter Master Havildar, was directed to take charge of it and he fought courageously and cleverly.



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Citation

Company Quarter Master Havildar Abdul Hamid (No. 2639985), 4 Grenadiers

At 0800 hours on 10 September 1965, the Pakistani forces launched an attack with a Regiment of Patton tanks on a vital area ahead of village Chima on the Bhikhiwind road in the Khem Karan sector. The attack was preceded by intense artillery shelling. The enemy tanks penetrated the forward positions by 0900 hours. Realising the grave situation, Company Quarter Master Havildar Abdul Hamid, who was commander of a recoilless gun detachment, moved out to a flanking position, with his gun mounted on a jeep, under intense enemy shelling and tank fire. Taking an advantageous position, he knocked out the leading enemy tank and then swiftly changing his position, he sent another enemy tank up in flames. By this time the enemy tanks in the area spotted him and brought his jeep under concentrated machine gun and high explosive fire. Undeterred, Company Quarter Master Havildar Abdul Hamid kept on firing on yet another enemy tank from his recoilless gun. While doing so, he was mortally wounded by an enemy high explosive shell.

Havildar Abdul Hamid's brave action inspired his comrades to put up a gallant fight and to beat back the heavy tank assault by the enemy. His complete disregard for his personal safety during the operation and his sustained act of bravery in the face of constant enemy fire were a shining example not only to his Unit but to the whole Division and were in the highest traditions of the Indian Army.

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11

Ardeshir Burzorji Tarapore

Ardeshir Burzorji Tarapore was born on 18 August 1923 in Mumbai. He was born in the family of a great fighter, Ratanjiba who was a military leader in the army of Shivaji. Ratanjiba was given the 'Mansab' (charge) of one hundred villages in honour of his services, loyalty and bravery. One of the important villages was named Tarapore, so it became the title of the family.

Ardeshir's grandfather migrated to Deccan and joined customs department in Hyderabad, his father too chose to remain in the same department. Ardeshir, who was lovingly called Adi, joined Army.

From his childhood, he showed courage and bravery during many incidents. He excelled in sports and other physical activities. Once his older sister Yadgar was playing in the backyard of their house, suddenly their domestic cow ran towards her to charge, Adi saw it. He stood in front of the cow with a stick in his hand. He hit the cow's nose with the stick and the cow ran away. Young Adi was praised for acting bravely.

After matriculation in 1940, Adi was commissioned in the Hyderabad State Army. He joined the Officers Training School at Golconda. In 1942, he was commissioned in the 7th Hyderabad Infantry.

Once during a routine grenade-throwing training session, a recruit could not throw it correctly and it fell back into the throwing bay. Adi rose to the occasion, he picked up the grenade and threw it at a safe distance. He was injured too. Maj Gen El Edroos who was present there was deeply impressed with his bravery and presence of mind. Adi requested him to transfer him to an armoured regiment.

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This was accepted and it was as if his dream had come true. He became part of the 1st Hyderabad Imperial Service Lancers. In the army circles he is remembered as a shy, polite and disciplined officer when he joined the regiment. He grew moustache like his senior, Bahadur Singh, NCO which he jokingly described as cavalier moustache.

Lt Col Tarapore was quick and wise in making decisions. On one occasion, there were orders to move the regiment in 24 hours. On realising the urgency of the situation, Tarapore ordered to remove the barricades and fences around the regiment so that trucks can be moved nearest to the loading places like stores, etc. Tanks were taken nearest to the ammunition bays. The entire regiment worked day and night and met the deadline of the schedule, though not to forget the complaints of damages of Engineering Department which took time to be sorted out later on!

There was another incident which manifested Adi's courage and commitment to his country. During World War II, he and other soldiers were sent to the Middle East on posting. The British commanding officer was in the habit of humiliating Indians. He was also not happy with their fighting capabilities. Adi protested seriously. He vehemently opposed him for this behaviour. Adi's regiment was punished, they were told to remain isolated, not to meet and mix with others. Their ammunition was also withdrawn. It was sorted out by the intervention of Maj Gen El Edroos.

After the Hyderabad state merged with the Union of India, Adi was posted to the Poona Horse. He was proud to be in the Poona Horse. Adi was married to Perin and had two children — Xerxes and Zarine. Adi was a brave soldier of the country who was also a loving father, a family man, a religious person and a loyal friend.

The Battle of Chawinda

The war with Pakistan was declared on 27 August 1965. That was the time for army to gather themselves and chalk out a strategy to capture Chawinda in the Sialkot sector, Pakistan. The area of Chawinda was occupied by almost two regiments of Pakistan

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armour and infantry. Lt Col Tarapore had instructed his soldiers, not to harm the civilians. The fight was between the armies.

The fiercest battle was the tank battle at Phillora in the Sialkot sector. Indian soldiers had entered the Pakistan territory without any retaliation from the enemy. The villagers mistook them for their own soldiers. The strategy was to strike a surprise attack. The tanks moved into the territory of Pakistan without being stopped. The 1 Armoured Division was ready with four armoured regiments. It shot the first air attack on the enemy. Pakistan retaliated and caused heavy damage to lorry and infantry sections. There was utter chaos for some time which was resolved by Lt Col Tarapore who moved in 17 Horse to stabilise the situation. An intense battle was fought between the two sides which resulted in the destruction of 13 tanks. Pakistani troops retreated towards Chawinda and the Indian troops captured Phillora in the Sialkot sector. Tarapore was seriously injured in the battle. A true and valiant soldier, injury meant nothing to him.

He planned an infantry attack accompanied by 17 Horse and 9 Garhwal on 13-14 September. Unfortunately, the strategy did not work out well as Pakistan forces with their tanks were already ready to attack. They were hiding themselves in the areas of Buttar and Dograndi. Indian soldiers felt the dire need of more forces to join them because Indian tanks were destroyed and soldiers were killed. Lt Col Tarapore joined them immediately with his tank and directed A Squadron also to pitch in. It was a daring attack on the enemy who was hiding under the cover of vegetation. Six Pakistani Patton tanks were destroyed. Buttar and Dograndi were captured.

This was the moment of celebration but the battle was not over for Lt Col Tarapore. He had to capture Wazirwali. Tarapore attacked Chawinda with his regiment, fought brilliantly. They destroyed approximately 60 enemy tanks and lost nine tanks during this battle. What stood out prominently was Tarapore's excellent show of bravery in fighting as well as inspiring his soldiers. This was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Indian Army. Tarapore was quite satisfied with himself and his soldiers. The battle was still

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going on but he knew the outcome. It was only a matter of time that Pakistan would be completely defeated. Brave as always, he was, unmindful of his injuries, he stood unguarded on his tank sipping tea. Amidst ferocity of the battle, a shell set his tank ablaze. Tarapore was engulfed in flames never to rise again.

Maj N.S. Cheema received a call from his CO, Lt Col Tarapore on the first day of the Battle of Chawinda. Maj Cheema assumed that it was a regular war briefing but was surprised to hear from Lt Col Tarapore about his last wishes in case he was killed in battle. He said: "I must be cremated in the battlefield, and my prayer book must be given to my mother; my gold chain to my wife; my ring to my daughter; my bracelet and pen to my son." He also conveyed that he wanted his son to join the army. Exactly, after five days, on 16 September 1965, Tarapore was fatally wounded.

The soldiers bid adieu to the hero. His tank Khushab was a reminder of two Victoria Crosses, which 17 Horse won. It was captured by Pakistan.

Lt Col Ardeshir Burzorji Tarapore was posthumously awarded the highest wartime gallantry medal, the Param Vir Chakra.

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Citation

Lieutenant Colonel A. B. Tarapore (IC 5565), Poona Horse (17 Horse)

On 11 September 1965, the Poona Horse Regiment, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel A. B. Tarapore, was assigned the task of delivering the main armoured thrust for capturing Phillora in the Sialkot sector in Pakistan. As a preliminary to making a surprise attack on Phillora from the rear, the regiment was thrusting forward between Phillora and Chawinda, when it was suddenly counter-attacked by the enemy's heavy armour from Wazirwali. Lt Col A. B. Tarapore who was then at the head of his regiment, defied the enemy's charge, held his ground and gallantly attacked Phillora with one of his squadrons supported by an infantry battalion. Though under continuous enemy tank and artillery fire, Lt Col Tarapore remained unperturbed throughout this action and when wounded, he refused to be evacuated.

On 14 September 1965, though still wounded he again led his regiment to capture Wazirwali. Such was his grit and determination that unmindful of his injury, he again gallantly led his regiment and captured Jassoran and Butur-Dograndi on 16 September 1965. His own tank was hit several times, but despite the odds, he maintained his pivots in both these places and thereby allowed the supporting infantry to attack Chawinda from the rear. Inspired by his leadership, the regiment fiercely attacked the enemy's heavy armour destroying approximately sixty enemy tanks at a cost of only nine tank casualties, and when Lt Col Tarapore was mortally wounded, the regiment continued to defy the enemy.

The valour displayed by Lieutenant Colonel Ardeshir Burzorji Tarapore in this heroic action which lasted six days was in keeping with the highest traditions of the Indian Army.

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A Saga of Heroism...

India-Pakistan War 1971

Lt Gen AAK Niazi signing the Instrument of Surrender at Dhaka on 16 December 1971 with Lt Gen JS Aurora (GOC-in-C East). Standing (L to R) Vice Admiral N Krishnan (FOC-in-C East), Air Marshal Dewan (AOC-in-C East), Lt Gen Sagat Singh, Maj Gen JFR Jacob (Chief of Staff Eastern Army)

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Map of India and its neighbours

Battlefield is a Playground for War Heroes!

The world as we know today was not like this always. Influenced by various factors, it keeps on changing. War has been a major factor in shaping the course of history. The 1971 war dramatically changed the situation in India's neighbourhood. It was in this war, that India, since its Independence had achieved a conclusive victory and the credit goes to the concerted efforts and supreme sacrifices of our brave soldiers.

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Here are the stories of four such war heroes, who were awarded the Param Vir Chakra, the highest wartime gallantry medal in India. But, let us first understand the backdrop of the 1971 war (see map).

Why Did It All Begin?

We know Pakistan came into existence on 14 August 1947. At that time, it was split into two, one each on either side of India, namely West Pakistan and East Pakistan (which emerged later as Bangladesh in 1971). But West Pakistan insisted on total domination over the other. Urdu was declared as the sole official language of the entire Pakistan. However, many students in East Pakistan sacrificed their lives on 21 February 1952 for the cause of Bengali language, their mother tongue.

The first general elections for the entire Pakistan were held in 1970. On one hand, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, achieved a landslide victory in East Pakistan. On the other, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto won most of the seats in West Pakistan. But the military and civilian leaders based in West Pakistan rejected this popular verdict and refused to share power with the elected representatives of East Pakistan.

On 26 March 1971 (which later became the Independence Day of Bangladesh), the Pakistani Army launched operations against the Bengali nationalists. A reign of terror was unleashed on the people of East Pakistan. The government had indulged in genocide against its own people! The differences between the eastern and western parts of Pakistan became irreconcilable. Thus, the break-up of Pakistan appeared increasingly inevitable.

Throughout 1971, India had to accommodate about ten million refugees coming from East Pakistan. West Bengal and the North East region were severely affected by the massive influx. But India continued to extend both moral and material support wholeheartedly to the just cause of the freedom struggle in East Pakistan. This, however, was strongly contested by West Pakistan.

On the global front, by the early 1970s, the US and China began to cooperate. Henry Kissinger, the advisor to the then US President Richard Nixon, made a secret visit to China via Pakistan in July 1971.

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To counter the US-Pakistan-China axis, India signed the 20-year Treaty of Peace and Friendship with the Soviet Union in August 1971.

Launching of Operations

The Indian military intervention became inevitable, in view of the pre-emptive strikes launched by Pakistan against India on 3 December 1971. The Chief of the Army Staff, Gen Sam Manekshaw, masterminded the campaigns. During this 14-day war, India mostly adopted aggressive strategies on the eastern front and defensive strategies on the western front. The Indian armed forces fought in close collaboration with the people in East Pakistan. The pro-Pakistan tilt of the US was clearly displayed when it dispatched its aircraft carrier to the Bay of Bengal during the war. This move deeply distressed India. At last, the Pakistani forces in Bangladesh – about 90,000 Prisoners of War (PoWs) surrendered to the forces of India and Bangladesh on 16 December 1971.

This day is commemorated as *Vijay Diwas* (Victory Day) both in Bangladesh and India. India, thus, played the role of a catalyst in the Liberation War of Bangladesh. India immediately announced a unilateral ceasefire on the western front. The hostilities ended finally with the signing of the Simla Agreement by Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on 3 July 1972.

In the 1971 war, unlike the earlier wars, India achieved a decisive victory. This war was replete with tales of extraordinary courage displayed by the Indian armed forces – Army, Air Force and Navy – both on the eastern and western fronts. India suffered more than 12,000 casualties of which about 3,000 lost their lives. Nearly 600 officers and men of the armed forces were decorated with gallantry medals of which four were awarded the Param Vir Chakra (PVC), 76 Maha Vir Chakra (MVC) and 513 Vir Chakra (VrC).

The war heroes who were awarded the PVC were Lance Naik Albert Ekka (posthumously), Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon (posthumously), 2/Lt Arun Khetarpal (posthumously) and Maj Hoshiar Singh. All four of them hailed from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. They personified valour in unique ways in different theatres of the war! Let us find out more about them.

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12

Albert Ekka

Born on 27 December 1942 in a tribal family, Albert Ekka was the son of Julius and Mariam Ekka. His village Jari in district Gumla is about 175 kilometres from Ranchi, Jharkhand. He had always been a jovial child and grew up to be an optimistic individual with a happy-go-lucky attitude. Adventurous by nature, he dreamed to join the Indian Army.

His dream turned into a reality on his twentieth birthday, when he enrolled himself in the 14th Battalion, Brigade of the Guards. His skill of hunting with bow and arrow in the jungle proved to be advantageous in the Army. He was always right on target with the guns as well! His marksmanship of the very first order was admired by one and all. He also excelled in games, especially hockey. He served in the counter-insurgency operations in the North East region. Nine years into the service, he was ready to accomplish the greatest mission of his life!

When the 1971 war broke out, the Indian armed forces fought on the eastern and western fronts as well. The Battle of Gangasagar was crucial in paving the way for the movement of the Indian troops towards their ultimate target in Bangladesh. The contribution of Lance Naik Albert Ekka to India's victory in this battle was immense.

Breaching the Enemy Defences

During the 1971 war, the 14 Guards had to capture a Pakistani position at Gangasagar, about six kilometres west of Agartala, Tripura, on the eastern front. This was located on a major railway link to Dacca (now Dhaka). Owing to its strategic location, the post

was turned into a fortress by the enemy. The entire area was heavily mined. But the capture of Gangasagar was the key that would lead to the capture of Akhaura, on the way to Dhaka. So the 14 Guards launched an attack on enemy positions on the night of 3 December.

Lance Naik Albert Ekka was confident and determined to overcome the odds. He knew that it was time to 'do or die' for the nation and considered his duty to be his religion. He confidently spearheaded the attacks during this operation.

Col O.P. Kohli (Retd), then a Captain, was commanding this mission. He knew Albert Ekka from the time the latter joined the Army. He described his steely resolve thus: "A sort of an introvert in social circles, Ekka was very demonstrative during the exercises and training before the War. His looks were extremely deceptive and he didn't seem to be very active physically but had it not been for him, the objective may not have been achieved that day. A very keen soldier, Ekka insisted on leading the file formation... I was a few feet from him when he came across a Pakistani sentry. "*Kaun hai wahan* (Who's there)?," the sentry challenged and Ekka replied, "*Tera baap* (Your father)," before charging with his bayonet."

Risking his life, Lance Naik Albert Ekka single-handedly achieved two major breakthroughs by smashing the strongholds of the enemy. Epitomising the motto of the Brigade of the Guards, "*Pahla, Hamesha Pahla*" (First, Always First), he led the assault. He swiftly cleared the bunkers and silenced the LMG. Undaunted by the continuous shelling, he reached behind the enemy lines. Although grievously wounded in these close encounters, Lance Naik Albert Ekka continued to pursue the objectives of his company relentlessly. He soon destroyed the MMG.

During the mission, he eliminated several enemies and fought until his last breath. His actions saved the lives of his colleagues and helped them to advance towards their next target. The fall of Gangasagar forced the enemy to vacate Akhaura. Soon, the Indian troops were on their victorious march towards Dhaka.

This young soldier of 29 years was posthumously awarded the Param Vir Chakra for his exceptional valour. This was the one and only Param Vir Chakra awarded for action on the eastern front. He left behind his wife Balamdina and a five-year-old son, Vincent. To

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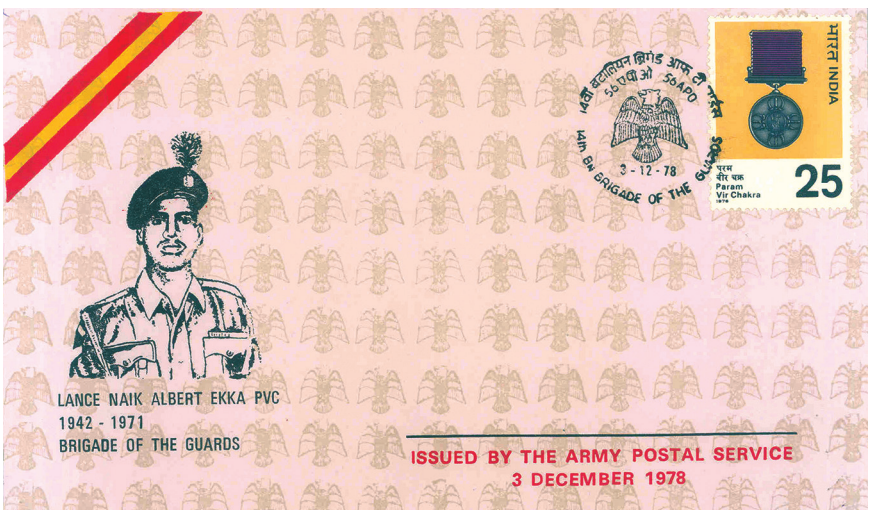
honour him, the Army Postal Service issued a Special Cover on 3 December 1978.

A major road junction in Ranchi was named as Albert Ekka Chowk, and his life-size statue was installed. A commemorative postage stamp was also issued in his honour by the Government of India on the occasion of the 50th Republic Day in 2000. A block (subdivision) in his home district of Gumla was named as Albert Ekka Block.

*Balamdina Ekka lays wreath at the war memorial near the burial site of Albert Ekka, PVC, in Dukli near Agartala, Tripura (*The Hindu*, 10 January 2016)*



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Citation

Lance Naik Albert Ekka (No. 4239746), 14 Guards

Lance Naik Albert Ekka was in the left forward company of a Battalion of the Brigade of Guards during their attack on the enemy defence at Gangasagar on the eastern front. This was a well fortified position held in strength by the enemy. The assaulting troops were subjected to intense shelling and heavy small arms fire, but they charged on to the objective and were locked in bitter hand-to-hand combat. Lance Naik Albert Ekka noticed an enemy Light Machine Gun inflicting heavy casualties on his company. With complete disregard to his personal safety, he charged the enemy bunker, bayoneted two enemy soldiers and silenced the Light Machine Gun. Though seriously wounded in this encounter, he continued to fight alongside his comrades through the mile deep objective, clearing bunker after bunker with undaunted courage. Towards the northern end of the objective, one enemy Medium Machine Gun opened up from the second storey of a well fortified building inflicting heavy casualties and holding up the attack. Once again this gallant soldier without a thought to his personal safety, despite his serious injury and the heavy volume of enemy fire, crawled forward till he reached the building and lobbed a grenade through the loophole of the bunker, killing one enemy and injuring the other. The Medium Machine Gun, however, continued to fire. With outstanding courage and grim determination, Lance Naik Albert Ekka scaled a side wall and entering the bunker, bayoneted the enemy who was still firing and thus silenced the Machine Gun, saving further casualties to his company and ensured the success of the attack. In this process, however, he received serious injuries and succumbed to them after the capture of the objective.

In this action, Lance Naik Albert Ekka displayed the most conspicuous valour, determination and made the supreme sacrifice in the best traditions of the Army.

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13

Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon

Nirmal Jit was born on 17 July 1945 to Sardar Trilok Singh Sekhon and Harbans Kaur. His village, Issewal is located in the vicinity of the Halwara Air Force Station, near Ludhiana, Punjab. Since his childhood, he was fascinated by the aircrafts. He was fond of stories of the famous warrior of the early 19th century, Hari Singh Nalwa. Moreover, he was inspired by the experiences of his father, who served in the Indian Air Force (IAF). Hearing enthusiastically the stories of thrills and frills of the skies, Nirmal Jit dreamt of enrolling himself into the IAF, one day. He was determined to become a fighter pilot, come what may!

He studied in Khalsa High School, Ajitsar Mohie, near Ludhiana, and secured a first division in matriculation. He joined the Dayalbagh Engineering College, Agra in 1962. While being a cadet in the National Cadet Corps (NCC), he was keenly interested in aero modelling. However, he left the engineering course midway to pursue his dream of joining the IAF especially after the 1965 war.

Despite many obstacles, Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon soon achieved his lifelong ambition. He was commissioned in the IAF on 4 June 1967. As he was very tall, it was uncomfortable for him to fit into the diminutive Gnat fighter aircraft! However, he soon became adept at flying the Gnat. Known for his generosity and friendly nature, he was warmly addressed as 'Brother'. He joined the No. 18 Squadron, called 'Flying Bullets', as Flying Officer in October 1968.

Safeguarding the Skies

Pakistan began the 1971 war by launching air raids across Northwest India. Many airfields came under the attack of the Pakistan Air

Force (PAF) aircrafts. Since 1948, India could not station air defence aircraft at Srinagar owing to an international agreement. But due to the war, a Gnat squadron detachment was based at Srinagar to defend the Kashmir valley. Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon joined this detachment in challenging circumstances. He had to quickly acclimatise himself to the harsh winter. Undaunted, he gave the PAF a befitting reply.

On 14 December, the F-86 Sabre jet fighters of the PAF which took off from Peshawar airbase began to strafe the Srinagar airfield. Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon was on readiness duty at that moment. The continuous surge of air attacks by the Pakistani pilots provided him the opportunity to display his mettle. Putting his life at grave risk, he took off in his Gnat aircraft. At the outset, it was evident that the odds were stacked against him. But he never failed to rise to the occasion. He began to engage the adversaries in fearsome battles in mid-air.

Manoeuvring his Gnat aircraft skilfully, Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon intercepted as many as six Pakistani Sabre fighter aircrafts. He attacked Sabres and destroyed several of them. He communicated his steely resolve to the Combat Air Patrol (CAP) control room: '*I am behind two Sabres. I won't let the… get away*'. Even though he was fighting against overwhelming odds, he inflicted heavy damage on the PAF. Confident of his skills, he reigned supreme in the skies and put up a brave fight until the very end. He touched the sky with glory! His daring action in these dogfights dented the resolve of the enemy pilots and prevented them from achieving any significant breakthrough in Kashmir.

Flying Officer Sekhon was merely 26 years old when he laid down his life defending the motherland. He left behind his wife, Manjit Sekhon, to who he was married exactly 10 months back. (She remarried later). He is the one and only hero from the IAF to have been honoured with the Param Vir Chakra till date. His exceptional flying skills and awe-inspiring actions in the most adverse circumstances serve as a source of motivation for all those who seek to master air warfare.

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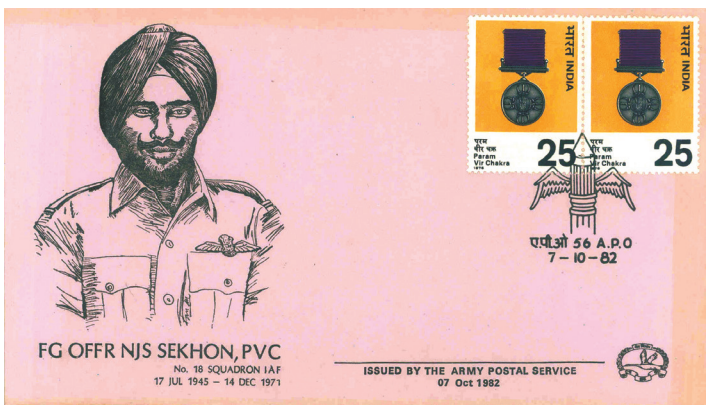
The Army Postal Service issued a Special Cover on 7 October 1982 to honour Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon during the 50th Anniversary Year of the IAF. A commemorative postage stamp was issued in his honour by the Government of India on the occasion of the 50th Republic Day in 2000. His statues along with Gnat aircrafts were installed on the premises of the District Court, Ludhiana, Punjab and the Air Force Museum, Palam, New Delhi. The film, *Hindustan Ki Kasam* (1973), directed by Chetan Anand, portrayed the role of the IAF during the 1971 war.

Statue of Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon with a Gnat aircraft at the Air Force Museum, Palam, New Delhi



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Citation

Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon (10877), Flying Branch (Pilot)

Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon was a pilot of Gnat detachment based at Srinagar for the air defence of the valley against Pakistani air attacks. From the very outbreak of the hostilities he and his colleagues fought the successive waves of intruding Pakistani aircraft with valour and determination, maintaining the high reputation of the Gnat aircraft. On 14 December 1971, Srinagar airfield was attacked by a wave of six enemy Sabre aircrafts. Flying Officer Sekhon was on readiness duty at the time. Immediately, however, no fewer than six enemy aircrafts were overhead, and they began bombing and strafing the airfield. In spite of the mortal danger of attempting to take off during the attack, Flying Officer Sekhon took off and immediately engaged a pair of the attacking Sabres. In the fight that ensued, he secured hits on one aircraft and set another on fire. By this time, the other Sabre aircraft came to the aid of their hard-pressed companions and Flying Officer Sekhon's Gnat was again outnumbered, this time by four to one. Even though alone, Flying Officer Sekhon engaged the enemy in an unequal combat. In the fight that followed, at tree top height, he almost held his own, but was eventually overcome by sheer weight of numbers. His aircraft crashed and he was killed.

The sublime heroism, supreme gallantry, flying skill and determination above and beyond the call of duty displayed by Flying Officer Sekhon in the face of certain death, have set new heights to Air Force tradition.

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14

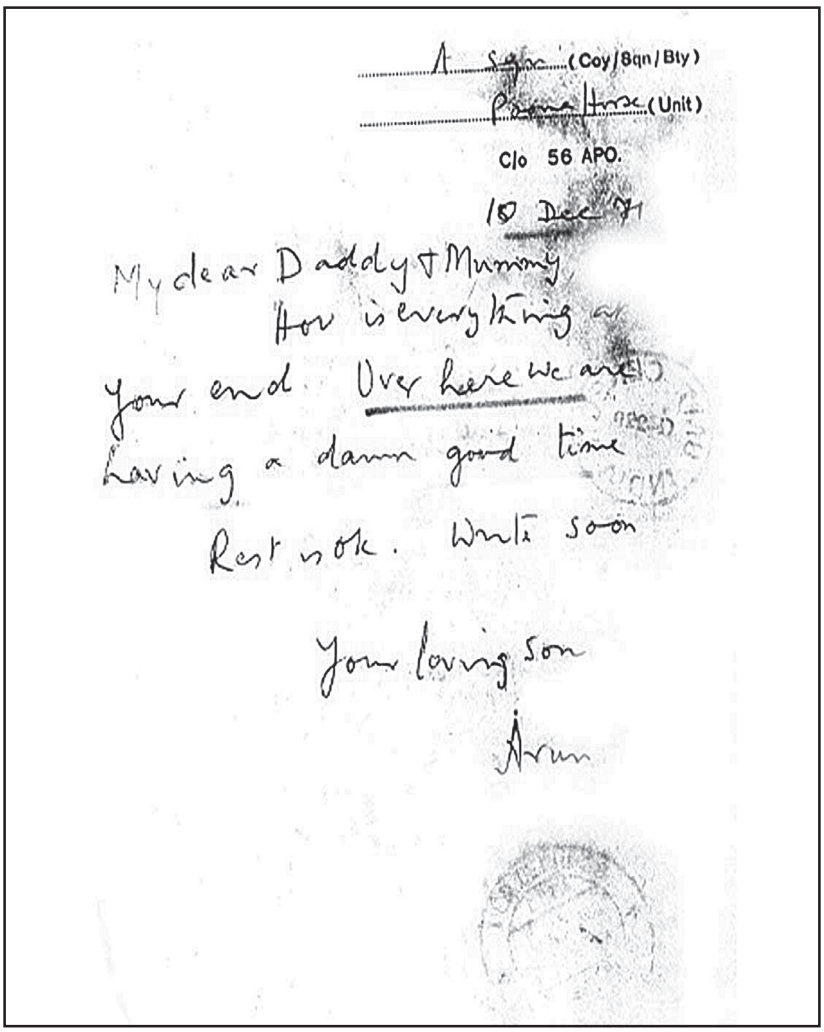
Arun Khetarpal

In 1950, the Year of the Republic, a boy named Arun was born on 14 October in Pune, Maharashtra. He was the elder son of Brig M.L. Khetarpal and Maheshwari Khetarpal. Several generations of his distinguished family had served in the armed forces. Among the institutions, he attended was the Lawrence School, Sanawar, Himachal Pradesh. Possessing a cheerful personality, he performed brilliantly both in academics and sports. Given his all-round performance, he became the school prefect. He always lived up to the school's motto: 'Never Give In'.

In 1967, he joined the National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla, Pune, and subsequently the Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun. He was commissioned in the 17 Poona Horse on 13 June 1971.

Just six months later, the war began on 3 December 1971. During this war, like the 1965 war, tank battles were fierce and crucial. They were fought mostly in Punjab on the western front. Among them was the famous Battle of Basantar in the Shakargarh sector. Both sides wanted total control of this sector, owing to its strategic location. The border at this position is about ten kilometres from the Pathankot-Jammu Highway. The Indian troops reached ten miles inside the Pakistani territory. 2/Lt Arun Khetarpal was amidst the action in this battle commanding a Centurion tank named Famagusta.

As part of the operations, the 17 Poona Horse had to establish a bridgehead across the Basantar River, a tributary of the Ravi river.


1 Sqn (Coy/Sqn/Bty)
Poona Horse (Unit)
C/o 56 APO.
10 Dec 71
My dear Daddy & Mummy,
How is everything at
your end. Over here we are all
having a damn good time
Rest ok. Write soon
Your loving son
Arun

2/Lt Arun Khetarpal's letter to his parents from the battlefield on 10 December 1971

This was accomplished by the night of 15 December. The area was full of enemy minefields. Noticing the action of enemy armour at the bridgehead, the Indian troops called for tank support urgently.

The 17 Poona Horse decided to embark on a dangerous mission to push through the deadly minefield. By midnight, this regiment had established a link-up between the armour and the infantry at the bridgehead. On the morning of 16 December, the enemy

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counterattacked with an armour regiment. Sadly, the Indian troops were heavily outnumbered and therefore sought reinforcements. 2/Lt Arun Khetarpal, deployed at a nearby location with his troops, decided to take on the enemy head-on. His troops came under incessant firing from the enemy forces. Still he retaliated by attacking the enemy positions and totally destroying them. Invigorated with this success, he began to pursue the enemy tanks. But, the enemy soon deployed a complete armoured squadron to achieve a breakthrough.

A Fight to the Death

In the fierce tank battles that followed, 2/Lt Khetarpal single-handedly destroyed many enemy tanks. Just then, his tank received a hit from the enemy and was partially destroyed. Sensing an immediate threat to his life, his superior sent him urgent orders to abandon the burning tank. But he politely refused to comply and responded with the following message: "*No Sir, I will not abandon my tank. My gun is still working and I will get these....*"

Displaying grim determination, he began the final assault on the remaining enemy tanks from a close range. He shot the last enemy tank, barely 100 metres away. At this stage, his tank received one more hit. But then, a will of iron was his best weapon! He offered solid resistance to the enemy tanks and prevented a breakthrough until he breathed his last. The day of martyrdom of Arun Khetarpal, 16 December, coincided with the surrender of the Pakistani forces on the eastern front. This day is commemorated as the *Vijay Diwas* (Victory Day).

For his conspicuous courage in the face of the enemy, 2/Lt Arun Khetarpal was honoured with the Param Vir Chakra, posthumously. The Khetarpal Parade Ground at NDA and the Khetarpal Auditorium at IMA are everlasting tributes to his valour. His heroic deeds in the battlefield serve as an abiding source of inspiration for generations to come.

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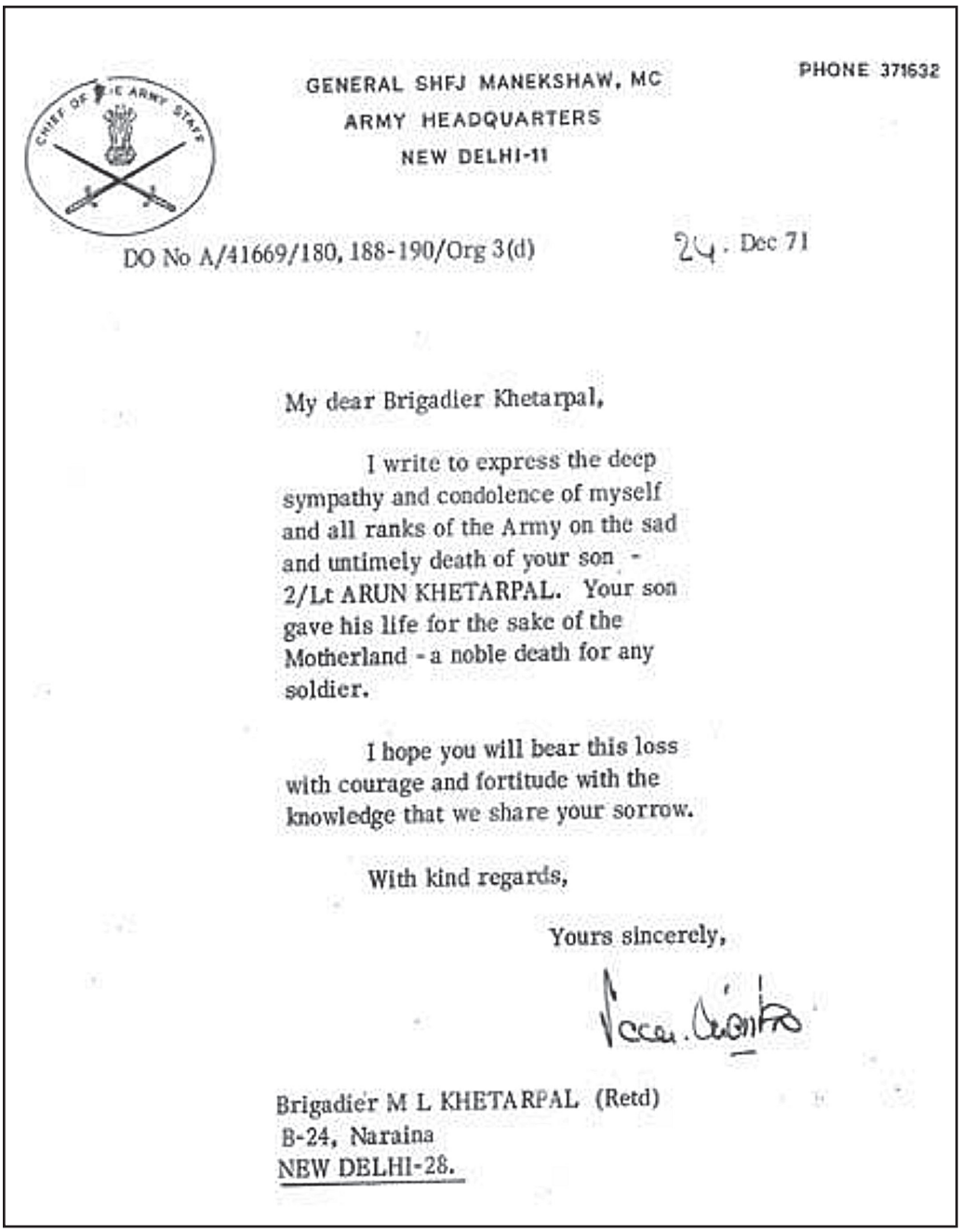

GENERAL SHFJ MANEKSHAW, MC
ARMY HEADQUARTERS
NEW DELHI-11

PHONE 371632

DO No A/41669/180, 188-190/Org 3(d)

24 Dec 71

My dear Brigadier Khetarpal,

I write to express the deep sympathy and condolence of myself and all ranks of the Army on the sad and untimely death of your son - 2/Lt ARUN KHETARPAL. Your son gave his life for the sake of the Motherland - a noble death for any soldier.

I hope you will bear this loss with courage and fortitude with the knowledge that we share your sorrow.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Sam Manekshaw

Brigadier M L KHETARPAL (Retd)
B-24, Naraina
NEW DELHI-28.

Chief of the Army Staff, Gen Manekshaw's condolence letter commending the valour of 2/Lt Arun Khetarpal (24 December 1971)

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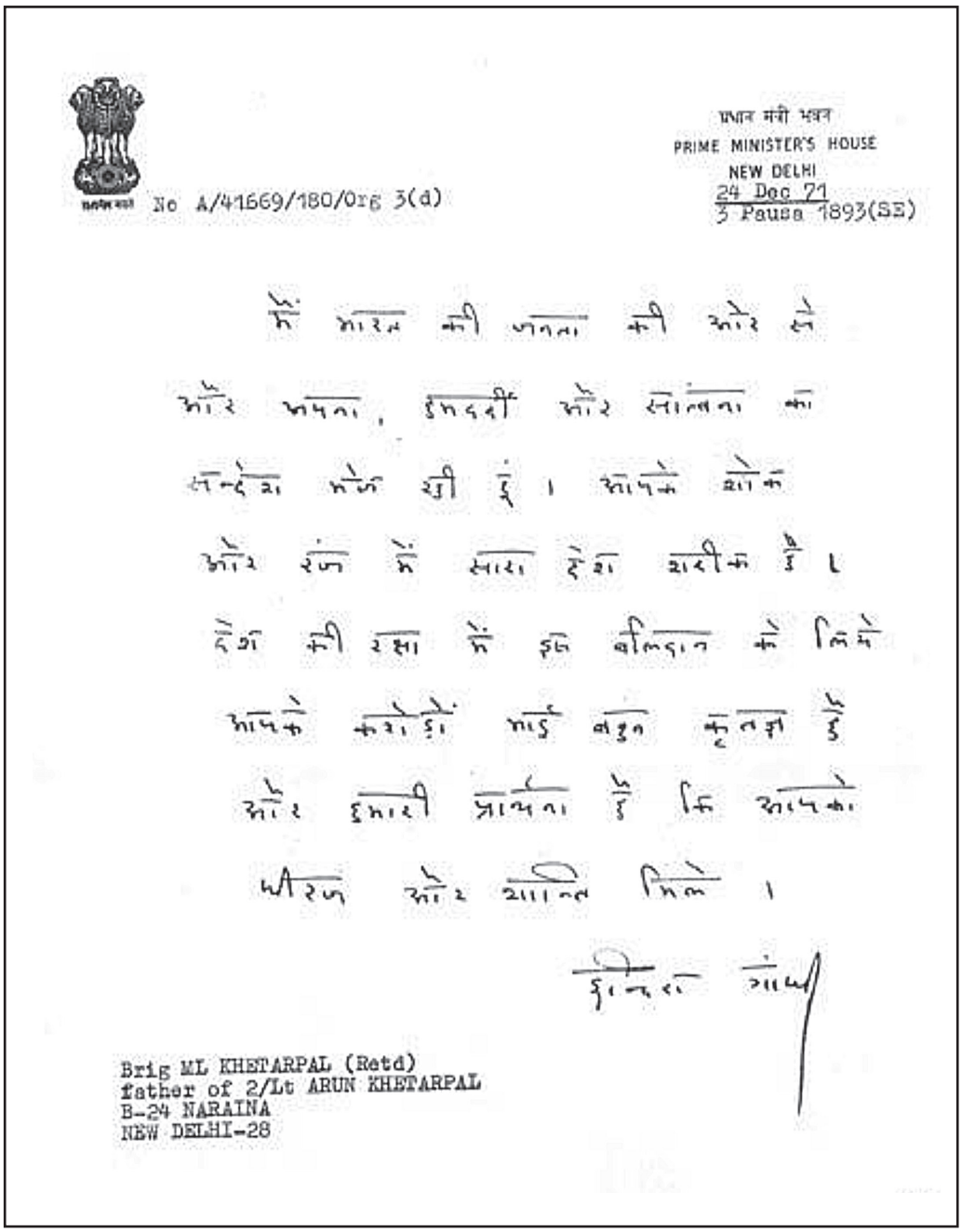

प्रधान मंत्री भवन
PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE
NEW DELHI
24 Dec 71
3 Pausa 1893(SE)

No A/41669/180/Org 3(d)

Brig ML KHETARPAL (Retd)
father of 2/Lt ARUN KHETARPAL
B-24 NARAINA
NEW DELHI-28

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's letter of condolence and appreciation of the sacrifice by 2/Lt Arun Khetarpal (24 December 1971)

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Unveiling of the statue of 2/Lt Arun Khetarpal at his alma mater, the Lawrence School, Sanawar on 3 December 2011

Tank of 2/Lt Arun Khetarpal at the Armoured Corps Centre and School, Ahmednagar, Maharashtra

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Citation

Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal (IC-25067), Poona Horse

On 16 December 1971, when our position at Jarpal in the Shakargarh sector was subjected to an attack by a Pakistani armoured regiment and our troops were heavily outnumbered by enemy forces, the squadron commander asked for reinforcements. 2/Lt Khetarpal on hearing this transmission over the radio answered the call and moved with his troops to meet the enemy attack. On the way, his troops came under fire from enemy strong points and Recoilless Gun nests that were still holding out in the bridgehead established across the Basantar river by our troops. Realising that a critical situation was developing and prompt action was to be taken, 2/Lt Khetarpal assaulted the enemy strong points, physically overrunning them and capturing the enemy's infantry and weapon crews at pistol point. In the course of this action, the commander of one of the tanks in his troop was killed, but 2/Lt Khetarpal continued to attack relentlessly till all opposition was overcome and he broke through towards the location of our squadron. When the enemy tanks started pulling back after their initial probing attacks, he chased them and destroyed one of them.

When the enemy launched another attack, with an armoured squadron, against the sector held by three of our tanks, one of which was manned by 2/Lt Khetarpal, a fierce battle ensued and 10 enemy tanks were hit and destroyed of which 2/Lt Khetarpal personally destroyed four. In the fight, 2/Lt Khetarpal's tank was hit and it burst into flames and he was severely wounded. 2/Lt Khetarpal was ordered to abandon his tank but realising that the enemy was still pressing their attack in this sector and that if he abandoned his tank, there was nothing to stop the enemy from breaking through. In spite of grievous wounds and his own tank burning, he continued engaging the enemy tanks and destroyed one more. At this stage, his tank was hit a second time as a

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result of which he died but the enemy was denied the breakthrough, he was seeking so desperately.

In this action, 2/Lt Arun Khetarpal displayed most conspicuous gallantry in the face of the enemy, indomitable fighting spirit and tenacity of purpose.

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Khetarpal Parade Ground, National Defence Academy

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15

Hoshiar Singh

There was a bright boy named Hoshiar in village Sisana of district Sonipat, Haryana. He was born on 5 May 1936 and his parents were Chowdhury Hira Singh and Mathuri Devi. Hailing from a farming family, he used to assist his parents in their fields.

Hoshiar Singh initially studied at a local school and then moved to the Jat Higher Secondary School and the Jat College, Rohtak. He performed well in studies and was awarded a first division in matriculation examination. He was a top-class volleyball player and soon became the captain of the Punjab team, which landed him a place in the national team.

Belonging to a village that has contributed more than 250 soldiers to the Indian Army, he was keen to join the army. He joined 2 Jat Regiment in 1957 as a soldier. Six years later, he became an officer by clearing the examination for promotion in his first attempt. He was commissioned in the Grenadiers Regiment on 30 June 1963. While serving in the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA), his bravery along with remarkable skills in leadership came to be noticed. He also played a crucial role in the Bikaner sector during the 1965 Indo-Pak war. Taking the initiative, he displayed his courage and dogged determination during the operations. For his brave acts, he received a Mention-in-Despatches. A greater role was in store for him six years later!

Indomitable Spirit Comes to the Fore

Soon after the 1971 war began on the western front, the 3rd Battalion of the Grenadiers Regiment spearheaded the campaign in the

Shakargarh sector. Maj Hoshiar Singh was a proud member of this unit. This battalion rapidly advanced during the first ten days. On 15 December, it was assigned the task of establishing a bridgehead across the Basantar River. However, the enemy troops had laid deep minefields on both sides of the river and were in a strong position. The advancing Indian troops came under intense shelling and suffered heavily. But under the courageous leadership of Maj Hoshiar Singh, they continued the assault doggedly and captured village Jarpal in the Punjab province of Pakistan. The enemy troops launched massive counter-attacks with the help of tanks.

Maj Hoshiar Singh was a true leader. Leading from the front, he provided inspiring leadership. He continuously motivated his men in the face of grave threats to perform at the highest level. His courage encouraged them to give their best. Under his dynamic leadership, his company repulsed all attacks, inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy.

Although hostilities ended on the eastern front by the evening of 16 December, the battles continued on the western front. On 17 December, the enemy troops launched yet another major attack with the support of heavy artillery. Maj Hoshiar Singh was seriously wounded by the enemy shelling. Despite this, he openly moved from trench to trench raising the morale of his soldiers. Nothing could hold him back! He continued to inflict heavy casualties on the enemy troops, forcing them to retreat. They left behind many dead, including their Commanding Officer, Lt Col Mohammed Akram Raja.

Maj Hoshiar Singh, thus, engaged the enemy forces in a steadfast manner. His dogged resistance, complete disregard for his personal safety and exemplary courage propelled his men to perform outstanding acts of gallantry. They foiled repeated attempts by the enemy to recapture the area. They lived up to his example. Although he was seriously wounded, he refused to be evacuated till the end of operations. He did not leave the battlefield until India was victorious! This was certainly an act beyond the call of duty. He was honoured with the highest wartime gallantry

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medal, the Param Vir Chakra. Maj Hoshiar Singh was the sole PVC Awardee of the 1971 war to receive it in person.

Maj Hoshiar Singh was a taskmaster as well as a caring person. He possessed thorough knowledge of the men he was commanding during times of peace as well as war. He used to stress upon rigorous training and practice on a regular basis. He contributed immensely to develop spirit of camaraderie, be it at the workplace or on the battlefield. When he served as a Company Commander at the IMA, his company became the overall champion company for six consecutive terms! This is a record that continues to remain unbroken. He rose to the rank of colonel prior to his retirement. Unfortunately, he suffered a heart attack and passed away on 6 December 1998 at the age of 62 leaving behind his wife, Dhanno Devi and three sons.

Maj Hoshiar Singh with the Chief of the Army Staff, Gen Manekshaw (1972)

Col Hoshiar Singh Memorial Primary School, Sisana, Haryana, with his bust

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Citation

Major Hoshiar Singh (IC-14608), 3 Grenadiers

On 15 December 1971, a battalion of the Grenadiers was given the task of establishing a bridgehead across the Basantar river in the Shakargarh sector. Major Hoshiar Singh was commanding the left forward company and he was ordered to capture the enemy locality at Jarpal. This was a well fortified position and was held in strength by the enemy. During the assault, his company came under intense shelling and effective crossfire from enemy Medium Machine Guns. Undeterred, he led the charge, and captured the objective after a fierce hand-to-hand fight. The enemy reacted and put in three counter-attacks on 16 December 1971, two of them supported by armour. Major Hoshiar Singh, unmindful of the heavy shelling and tank fire, went from trench to trench, motivating his command and encouraging his men to stand fast and fight. Inspired by his courage and dauntless leadership, his company repulsed all the attacks inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. Again, on 17 December 1971, the enemy made another attack with a battalion supported by heavy artillery fire. Though seriously wounded by enemy shelling, Major Hoshiar Singh again went from trench to trench moving about in the open with utter disregard to his personal safety when an enemy shell landed near the Medium Machine Gun post injuring the crew and rendering it inoperative. Major Hoshiar Singh, realising the importance of the Machine Gun fire, immediately rushed to the Machine Gun pit and, though seriously wounded himself, manned the gun inflicting heavy casualties on the enemy. The attack was successfully repulsed and the enemy retreated leaving behind 85 dead including their Commanding Officer and three other officers. Though seriously wounded, Major Hoshiar Singh refused to be evacuated till the ceasefire.

Throughout this operation, Major Hoshiar Singh displayed most conspicuous gallantry, indomitable fighting spirit and leadership in the highest traditions of the Army.

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A Saga of Heroism...

Siachen Conflict
1987

The Siachen Glacier region in the Karakoram range is the highest and coldest battlefield in the world.

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War in Siachen is said to be the toughest war, because there is perhaps no other place on this earth where man and nature are essentially in conflict with each other. The warring soldiers cannot escape the extreme cold, roaring blizzards and chilling winds which could tear the bare skin.

In a battle at Siachen, what has proved beyond doubt is man's ability to survive in the worst conditions and fight. The acts of bravery of these soldiers fighting at Siachen are manifestation of valour, sacrifice and dedication. These epic moments in the life of soldiers elevates them as examples of valour and mastery of skills of fighting wars in most difficult circumstances.

Dear Readers, there is another side too, of Siachen that has mesmerised the people with its natural beauty, altitude, serenity and which humbles one who reaches there with the purpose of conquering. Siachen glacier is the second longest glacier in the world. It is the most picturesque view of the nature with pink Sia blossoms surrounding the glacier, amidst the high peaks of snow there flows a long river – gushing with melting snow.

Siachen War Memorial, Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir

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As I spent my last evening on the Siachen, the snow was bathed in soft moonlight. The next day a blue sky extended beyond the frontiers: frontiers separating people with a similar culture, language and ethos. Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Kaifi Azmi, among the greatest poets of Pakistan and India respectively, have written on ending the conflict and calling for peace.

जो दूर से तूफ़ान का करते हैं नज़ारा
उनके लिए तूफ़ान वहाँ भी है यहाँ भी

धारे में जो मिल जाओगे, बन जाओगे धारा
यह वक्त का एलान वहाँ भी है यहाँ भी

This stanza by Kaifi Azmi, a renowned poet, means that a detached observer would realise that the communal winds do not discriminate on the basis of arbitrarily drawn borders; the answer lies in synthesis not segregation.

> But soon enough artillery shells would be fired under the same sky. I hoped that someday there would be peace on the Siachen glacier, roses (Sias) would grow wild, ibexes would roam and that mountaineers could explore and climb freely.
>
> – Harish Kapadia, *Siachen Glacier: The Battle of Roses*

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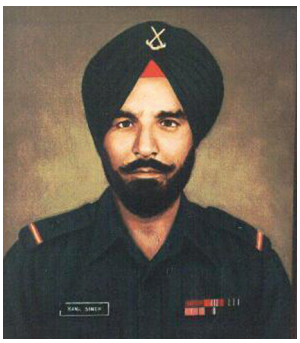
Bana Singh



Bana Singh was born on 6 January 1949 in Ranbir Singh Poha, a tehsil of Jammu and Kashmir. He was 19 years old when he joined Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry of the Indian Army. Bana Singh rose to the rank of Subedar Major. He was awarded the Param Vir Chakra, the highest award for gallantry for his bravery and leadership in the conflict against Pakistan at Saltoro Ridge, Siachen in June 1987.

Today he lives in Kadyal, a small village near Jammu. It is the brave soldier's second innings. Bana Singh works in his farms; he leads a disciplined life, eats simple food. Life still holds its charm for him. He is happy doing hard work in the fields. It is the season and crops which change but his routine remains the same throughout the year.

In the month of January, Bana Singh travels to New Delhi. For him, this is the most conspicuous time of the year – he participates in the Republic Day Parade. Before leaving for Delhi, he takes out his war medals, polishes them up to his satisfaction; recalls the freezing cold day in Siachen and the war he fought.

Another moment of pride was when the medal named after Bana Singh was awarded to his son Rajinder Singh at the Parade Ground also named after him.

His son joined the same regiment, 8 JAKLI, the starting point of Bana Singh's career in Indian Army.

I many times thought peace had come,
when peace was far away.

— Emily Dickinson

Siachen has been an issue of war between India and Pakistan. Both the countries have marked their borders, however, a patch of mountainous region heavily covered with snow remained unattended. Perhaps both the sides believed that patch of land would never be visited by any one of them because it was a challenge to survive in extreme cold conditions where it was even difficult to breathe. After some time, suspicious activities started in that area; Pakistan ceded 80 square kilometre land in Indian territory to China. It was when China and Pakistan started undue activities on the pretext of research, etc., that India became alert and made a move to occupy Saltoro Ridge area on the glacier. Subsequently, Pakistan ordered its troops to set up their post on Indian territory and named it Quaid Post after Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

A fierce battle was fought in Siachen which resulted in pain and suffering and the battle also disturbed the peace and calm of the nature that stood there as a mute spectator.

It was the call to march for Naib Subedar Bana Singh and his soldiers. Laced with their AK 47 rifles trudged through the layers of snow. It was above 19,000 feet, where icy winds blew day and night. Snowstorms reduced the visibility to almost zero. Still they could see the dead bodies of their comrades strewn around.

2/Lt Rajiv Pande, Naib Subedar Hemraj and 10 jawans were in the first patrol. They were trained in skiing, mountaineering and fighting in most difficult circumstances. They sustained themselves in sub-zero temperatures, fixing ropes, for scaling the snow covered heights. It was when they were only 500 metres away from the post which was captured by the Pakistanis that 2/Lt Pande sought permission on the radio set from his officers to go ahead. They were ordered to advance without realising that Pakistani SSG commandos had been on vigil. As soon as they came within their firing range, all of them were shot dead.

The senior officers of Indian Army and the then Defence Minister reached Sonam Post. They were shocked at the killing of their men in such a gruesome manner. Col Rai who was looking after this operation was furious. He pleaded with his officers for

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another chance to regain the Quaid Post. A team of two officers, three JCOs and 57 men was earmarked for the task. Naib Subedar Bana Singh was not part of the team originally. He was inducted in the team on the recommendation of Col Rai. As always, without wasting any time, Bana Singh packed his rucksack and joined the team. Operation Rajiv was launched to avenge the loss of 2/Lt Pande and his team.

On 22 June, the team ventured to reach Quaid Post. Lives of two soldiers were lost because of extreme weather conditions. They died of hypothermia. The second attempt also somewhat failed because of the high velocity winds, snowfall and difficulty in breathing. The team returned to the camp. They were disheartened but did not lose hope. They met furious Col Rai at the camp.

'Hamari joota parade hui' (We were summoned for a dressing down). Col Rai told the men in no uncertain terms that he wanted the post. 'The post has to be captured, we cannot let the deaths of Rajiv and his men go unavenged', he thundered.

Bana Singh justified Col Rai's anger. He felt that it was their duty and they had to do it.

Next day, 24 June, again the ropes were tied and Maj Virender Singh led the attack. He warned the soldiers not to turn back come what may. Fighting at high altitudes in freezing cold situations and arduous terrain took its toll. Soldiers lost their lives due to weather conditions, or they slipped into gorges. The enemy above in hangout could not keep proper watch because of poor visibility. They also thought that Indian soldiers would not succeed in such conditions. Little did they realise, that brave Indian soldier Bana Singh and handful of others were not deterred by the weather. They kept on moving inch-by-inch towards the enemy to take back Quaid Post.

Quaid Post, June 1987 – A Tale of Bravery

Naib Subedar Bana Singh with some soldiers ventured towards the enemy. They halted 15 metres away from Quaid Post for other soldiers to join them. Bana and his comrades spent the night

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freezing in the snow. Amidst continuous snowing, they moved on dangerously, but cleverly they flung the grenades and attacked the post. Bana Singh flung the grenade inside the bunker and latched it from outside. Some Pakistani soldiers ran into their side, others were killed. In the meantime, Maj Virendra Singh and his force also joined Bana Singh. Pakistanis who were trying to climb back were killed with light machine guns fire of Maj Virendra and his men.

Bana Singh showed exemplary courage, leadership qualities and wisdom in regaining Quaid Post from the Pakistanis. In the event of Maj Virender's serious injuries, Bana Singh assured him of even capturing the enemy alive as it was wished by Maj Virendra.

The enemy was routed out of the territory of India. Brave soldiers of India proved true to the hilt in safeguarding the honour of the motherland. Maj Virendra survived the attack; Rifleman Om Raj who fought and died for the country was awarded Vir Chakra along with Maj Virendra. On 27 June 1987, Brigade Commander Brig C. S. Nugyal reached the Quaid Post and embraced Bana Singh. He declared that the post would be named *Bana Top* thereafter.

Naib Subedar Bana Singh was awarded the Param Vir Chakra for conspicuous bravery and leadership under the most adverse conditions.

Operation Rajiv will also be remembered for the courage shown by the soldiers and officers of the Indian Army. The victory at Quaid Post was the result of accumulated efforts of all soldiers, and officers who fought the battle and those who were not on the battleground but proved to be the backbone of Rajiv operation. In recognition of their efforts, one Maha Vir Chakra, seven Vir Chakra and one Sena Medal were announced, besides the PVC. The Commanding Officer and the Commander were awarded the Uttam Yudh Seva Medals.

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Citation

Naib Subedar Bana Singh (IC 155825), 8 JAK LI

Naib Subedar Bana Singh volunteered to be a member of a task force constituted in June 1987 to clear an intrusion by an adversary in the Siachen Glacier area at an altitude of 21,000 feet. The post was virtually an impregnable glacier fortress with ice walls, 1500 feet high, on both sides. Naib Subedar Bana Singh led his men through an extremely difficult and hazardous route. He inspired them by his indomitable courage and leadership. The brave Naib Subedar and his men crawled and closed in on the adversary. Moving from trench to trench, lobbing hand grenades, and charging with the bayonet, he cleared the post of all intruders.

Naib Subedar Bana Singh displayed the most conspicuous gallantry and leadership under the most adverse conditions.

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A Saga of Heroism...

Sri Lanka Operation

1987

Indian Peacekeeping Operation in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka, located close to the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, was a former British colony until 1948. It was called Ceylon until 1972. It is home to the Sinhala and Tamil communities. The growing antagonism between the majority Sinhalas and the minority Tamils took a violent turn by the late 1970s. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), led by Velupillai Prabhakaran, emerged as a major insurgent group. Paradoxically, a Buddhist nation was ravaged by a deadly conflict!

The relationship between India and Sri Lanka began to be affected by the pangs of proximity. The internal conflict in Sri Lanka had serious implications for India in general and for Tamil Nadu in particular (see map). Various factors at the local, national and international levels got enmeshed. The Indian government, headed by the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, made strenuous efforts to bring the conflict in Sri Lanka to an end.

India and Sri Lanka signed a peace accord in Colombo on 29 July 1987. This agreement attempted to reconcile the unity and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka with legitimate aspirations of the Sri Lankan Tamils. Under this accord, many units of the Indian Army were to be dispatched to the Jaffna Peninsula in Sri Lanka to maintain law and order there. An Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) was constituted to implement the accord through 'Operation Pawan'. Unfortunately, political and diplomatic plans did not materialise. The 20,000-strong IPKF had to fight against the determined leadership and cadre of the LTTE. The IPKF hardly received any support from the Sri Lankan forces or for that matter even the local Tamils. The IPKF troops were caught up in a situation, where they had to fight a losing battle! Ultimately, the IPKF exited from Sri Lanka by early 1990. This remains a painful chapter of Indian military history. It was in these highly volatile circumstances that Maj Ramaswamy Parameswaran served in Sri Lanka. Let us read more about him.

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Ramaswamy Parameswaran

Parameswaran was born on 13 September 1946 in Mumbai, Maharashtra. His parents were K.S. Ramaswamy and Janaki. He studied in the South Indian Education Society (SIES) High School and College. Later, he joined the Officers' Training Academy (OTA), Chennai. He was granted the Short Service Commission in the Mahar Regiment in 1972. He took part in a number of counter-insurgency operations undertaken by the Indian Army in the North East region, especially Mizoram. He soon earned a reputation of possessing sterling character. Demonstrating high quality leadership, he was always at the forefront during the risky missions. He was affectionately addressed by his men as 'Parry Sahib'. He was keen to join the peacekeeping operation in Sri Lanka.

Leading from the Front

The Mahar Regiment, Maj Parameswaran's unit, was the first to land in Sri Lanka to take part in Operation Pawan launched by the IPKF. Maj Parameswaran became close to the local people as was able to communicate with them in Tamil and take care of their needs. During the late night on 25 November 1987, he and his column undertook a search mission in Kantharodai, near Uduvil in Jaffna. They were on the way to locate a consignment of weapons in the hideout of LTTE militants. They were ambushed by a group of militants. He decided to go for a counter-ambush. In the face of incessant fire from Heavy Machine Gun (HMG) of his adversaries, he fought back ferociously. Maj Ramaswamy Parameswaran died fighting at this post after he took a bullet in his chest in a hand-to-hand combat with a militant.

He lost his life at the age of 41 but his inspiring leadership and valiant action saved the lives of his men. He left behind his wife, Uma Parameswaran. (She remarried later). Maj Parameswaran inspired his unit and failed the intentions of the enemy with his presence of mind, cool courage and persistence.

For the supreme sacrifice, he was honoured with the highest wartime gallantry medal, the Param Vir Chakra, posthumously. He became the sole PVC Awardee from the IPKF operation in Sri Lanka. In his remembrance, 25 November is observed as the Param Vir Chakra (PVC) Day by 8 Mahar.

Laying wreath at the IPKF Memorial in Colombo, Sri Lanka (17 January 2012)

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Citation

Major Ramaswamy Parameswaran (IC-32907), 8 Mahar

On 25 November 1987, Major Ramaswamy Parameswaran was returning from a search operation in Sri Lanka late in the night, when his column was ambushed by a group of militants. With cool presence of mind, he encircled the militants from the rear and boldly charged into them, taking them completely by surprise. During the hand-to-hand combat, a militant shot him in the chest. Undaunted and unmindful of his grave injury, he snatched the rifle from the militant and shot him dead. In that condition, he continued to give orders and inspired his command till he breathed his last. The ambush was cleared. Five militants were killed and three rifles and two rocket launchers were recovered.

Major Ramaswamy Parameswaran displayed the most conspicuous bravery and made the supreme sacrifice by laying down his life.

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The Unknown Soldier

I am the unknown soldier, forgotten and ignored
When once the war is over and peace and quiet assured

We fought for you and country and now that we are dead
We rest in quiet exclusion, 'cause nothing more is said
Of how we did our duty, that you may sleep in peace
When once the foe was vanquished, and the strife of war had ceased

The country called upon us to do what needs be done
To oust the vicious enemy and ensure the war was won
Our near and dear ones blessed us and sent us full of pride
To defend our country's honour and some were new-wed brides

We went and fought your battles, most of which we won
Some never came back, all were mothers' sons
Our bodies they do lie there, on hill and vale and plain
Exposed to all the elements of snow and ice and rain

So many were so anxious, some still do wait in vain
What can you do to lessen our loved ones' grief and pain?
Our last rites were not given, we died a soldier's death
Our eldest sons kept waiting, their hopes could not be met

We went and did our duty, we do not ask for much
Only a place of honour, our loved ones' hearts to touch
A place where they can think of happy days gone by
To pray on the lonesome morrow and if need be stand and cry

Although we have left earth's orbit and need to rest in peace
Our souls are not past caring, our pain will never cease
Till you and the country's leaders create a haloed space
For a fitting War Memorial, on valour and honour based.

– Poem by Maj Gen Ian Cardozo (Retd), *Param Vir: Our Heroes in Battle*

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A Saga of Heroism...

Kargil Conflict
1999

Indian tricolour atop a Kargil peak

Not to scale

The arrows depict the areas where intrusions took place across a 160-km stretch along the LoC

Operation Vijay

The Kargil Conflict was fought during May-July 1999 between India and Pakistan in the Kargil district of Jammu and Kashmir, along the Line of Control (LoC). This was the first ever Indian war fought under constant media coverage. Frontline battles were taken into every Indian home, which generated tremendous public support for the army. This boosted the morale of our young soldiers and encouraged them to accomplish greater feats. 'Operation Vijay' was launched by India to flush out the Pakistani intruders from Kargil. The war was finally won by India and the whole nation celebrated this victory. However, not all soldiers, who fought in those most treacherous conditions, survived to be a part of the celebration.

How it All Started?

Pakistan's attempt to capture and control strategic areas in India, was a crucial part of a bigger strategic plan. During the winter of 1998-99, Pakistan sent its troops and paramilitary forces into the territory on the Indian side of the LoC with the nefarious intentions of cutting off Kashmir from Ladakh by severing the Srinagar-Leh National Highway,

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to isolate Kargil, and to terminate India's lifeline to Siachen. Initially, Pakistan denied its role in the operation, dubbing the intruders as Kashmiri "freedom fighters", but soon with the capture of regular Pakistani soldiers, recovery of bodies of Pakistani officers and soldiers and a large cache of documents, it was established beyond doubt, that this operation was launched by none other than the regular army of Pakistan.

By early May 1999, Pakistani forces infiltrated well across the LoC in the Mushkoh, Dras, Kaksar and Batalik sectors (see map). The extent of their penetration across the LoC varied from 4 to 8 kilometres in each sector. Strong defensive positions were established by the regular troops of the Northern Light Infantry and Special Service Group Commandos of the Pakistan army. Military stores were bolstered and extensive anti-personnel landmines were laid with full support of artillery, mortar and anti-aircraft missiles. A force of an approximate strength of 2000 intruders had transgressed into the Indian territory. They were now directly overlooking the Srinagar-Leh Highway.

Had it not been for the first reports, coming from the vigilant local shepherds on 6 May 1999, India would not have become aware of this clandestine intrusion. The Indian Army took time to assess the extent and size of the intrusion. A special patrol was sent which never returned. Although, a few days later, on the 10 June 1999, the Pakistani Army returned the brutally mutilated bodies of the brave sons of India – Maj Saurabh Kalia, the patrol leader and the five soldiers accompanying him.

As soon as the extent of intrusion was identified, it became evident that recapturing the posts would be a Herculean task. It was understood that fighting on rugged terrain was always advantageous for the defender (Pakistani soldiers inside Indian posts on hill tops) who is well secured behind his defences, while the attacker (Indian Army) is completely vulnerable, out in the open, as they climb steep slopes, which at times, are almost vertical and require the use of ropes. Their advantageous position made Pakistani troops confident of countering any attack by our soldiers. They, however, failed to aptly judge one dominant factor of the Indian Armed Forces—their boundless

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courage. Initially, our infantrymen had neither sufficient ammunition nor adequate winter clothing to counter the severe temperature conditions, but these hurdles did not deter them from fighting out with utmost bravery. They were well supported by the gunners who tried to mitigate the odds against our infantrymen by continuously bombarding the enemy posts. The Indian Air Force pilots wheeled far above, to blast the defenders. But in some areas, the enemy wasn't located in the visible range. Here, the Army had to send its soldiers for direct ground assault, which had its own dangers and challenges. The toughest challenge was the steep climb as high as 18,000 feet above the sea level. Since, a day-attack would be more hazardous, all attacks were made at night, in sub-zero temperatures. The Indian government's decision, not to cross the LoC restricted the tactical options available.

Despite these nightmarish conditions, the battalion commanders were under continuous pressure, as the uncompromising orders

Kargil War Memorial at Dras, Kargil, Jammu & Kashmir

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from the top demanded positive results literally overnight! Our brave soldiers rose to the occasion and made supreme sacrifices to achieve a near impossible victory. Twenty-five officers and 436 jawans sacrificed their lives in the Kargil Conflict and 54 officers and 629 jawans were wounded, many of them disabled for life.

The odds failed to deter the Indian troops, who gradually and steadily recaptured most of the ridges encroached by the Pakistani infiltrators, destroying the enemy strongholds and vanquishing them on their way uphill. Eventually, the fighting ceased on 26 July. The day has since then been marked as the Kargil *Vijay Diwas* (Victory Day).

Four brave soldiers of the Kargil Conflict were decorated with the Param Vir Chakra. Two were officers and two were jawans, but only two survived the harrowing ordeal to narrate the tale of their brave exploits. In the following pages, we will read the heroic deeds of the soldiers who turned war heroes overnight.

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Manoj Kumar Pandey

Born on 25 June 1975 in Sitapur (Uttar Pradesh), Manoj Kumar Pandey loved his motherland intensely. Even as a child, he performed great acts of bravery that amazed most of the elders. He always dreamt of adorning the prestigious uniform of the Indian Army to fight with its enemies, and decimate them. His keen desire to achieve uniqueness enabled him to establish his identity. It is noteworthy that he was a brilliant student in school, despite his gutsy temperament. He wrote in his personal diary that, 'some goals are so worthy; it's glorious even to fail.'

Manoj was the eldest child of Shri Gopi Chand Pandey and Smt Mohini Pandey. His early schooling took place at UP Sainik School based in Lucknow. Subsequently, he joined the prestigious National Defence Academy (NDA), to realise his dream of becoming an army officer. After graduating, Manoj joined the Indian Military Academy (IMA), to complete his final phase of training and was soon commissioned in the first battalion of the 11 Gorkha Rifles, a unit renowned for its heroic exploits.

Manoj Kumar Pandey was born to be an Indian soldier, who followed his dream of fighting and dying for his country some day, not before vanquishing the enemies of the soil. On commissioning, his first posting was in the Kashmir Valley. Thereafter, he was posted at Siachen. It was in Siachen, when he received orders to move to Batalik sector, where the first intrusions of the Pakistani Army were detected on the Kargil heights. Renowned as the best fighters for the terrain, the Gorkhas were soon deployed in the Kargil Sector. When his battalion became a part of 'Operation Vijay', he always

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stepped forward to carry out the most difficult tasks. He proved to be a vigilant observer when the mutilated bodies of four jawans of another unit, who were part of an earlier patrol in the area, were found. He fearlessly approached the enemy and brought crucial victories through his crusades.

His continuous efforts to establish contact with the post at Kukar Thang were finally successful and this led to its eventual capture. Manoj was also part of the team which recaptured Jaubar Top and successfully established the first post there. Subsequently, 'B' Company 1/11 Gorkha Rifles was given the task of capturing Khalubar. Platoon No. 5 Commander, Lt Manoj Kumar Pandey led his team towards the enemy positions. On 3 July 1999, a determined Manoj fearlessly charged ahead, with the booming battle cry, "*Jai Mahakali, Ayo Gorkhali!*", clearing two enemy bunkers. While clearing the third bunker, a rush of bullets hit him on his shoulder and legs. The wounds were grievous but the valiant soldier, not afraid of sacrificing his life, surged ahead from one bunker to the other urging his men to continue the assault. Unfortunately, one bullet drilled right through the middle of his forehead. He bled profusely, collapsing at the final bunker and finally asleep, breathing out fumes of revenge in his final words, "*Na Chhodnu!*" ('Don't spare them' in Nepalese).

Having carved a niche by showcasing divine bravura, Manoj's name unfailingly comes across during any visit to the Kargil War Museum at Dras, Kargil (Jammu & Kashmir) or the Army Quarters near the Cardio Thoracic Centre (CTC) Hospital in Pune or the Science Block at the National Defence Academy or one of the apartment 'complexes for veterans' in Ghaziabad district, Uttar Pradesh.

During an interview at the NDA, he was asked why he wanted to be in the armed forces. To this he replied, "I want to get the Param Vir Chakra." Taken aback by this most remarkable reply, the officer retorted in a good humoured way, "Is it a toy?". Manoj boldly stated that in the course of his career he would achieve this objective. And he did! The Param Vir Chakra was awarded to him, but unfortunately, he did not live to receive it in person. An entry

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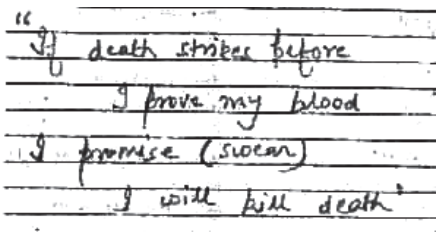
from his personal diary shared below, vividly reflects the undaunting spirit of the immortal hero.



The President, Shri K. R. Narayanan, presenting the Param Vir Chakra to the father of Lt Manoj Kumar Pandey (Posthumous) at the Republic Day Parade in 2000

Manoj Pandey Block, National Defence Academy

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Citation

Lieutenant Manoj Kumar Pandey (IC-56959), 1/11 Gorkha Rifles

Lieutenant Manoj Kumar Pandey, a young officer of the 1/11 Gorkha Rifles, took part in a series of boldly led attacks during Operation Vijay, forcing back the intruders with heavy losses in Batalik including the capture of Jaubar Top.

His finest hour was during the advance to Khalubar, when he was Number 5 Platoon Commander. On the night of 2/3 July 1999, as the platoon approached its final objective, it came under heavy and intense enemy fire from the surrounding heights. The officer was tasked to clear the interfering enemy positions, so as to prevent his battalion from getting daylighted, being in a vulnerable position. The officer quickly moved his platoon to an advantageous position under intense enemy fire and sent one section to clear the enemy positions from the right, while he himself proceeded to clear four other enemy positions on the left. Fearlessly assaulting the first enemy position, he killed two enemy personnel and proceeded to assault the second and destroyed it by killing two more enemy personnel. Lieutenant Manoj Kumar Pandey was injured on the shoulder and legs by enemy fire while clearing the third position. Undaunted and without caring for his grievous injury, he led the assault on the fourth position urging his men and destroyed the same with a grenade, even as he got a fatal Medium Machine Gun burst on his forehead. It is this singular dare devil act of the officer, which provided the critical firm base for the companies, which finally led to capture of Khalubar.

Lieutenant Manoj Kumar Pandey, thus showed most conspicuous bravery, indomitable courage, exemplary personal valour, outstanding leadership and devotion to duty of an exceptionally high order, in the face of the enemy and made the supreme sacrifice in the highest traditions of the Army.

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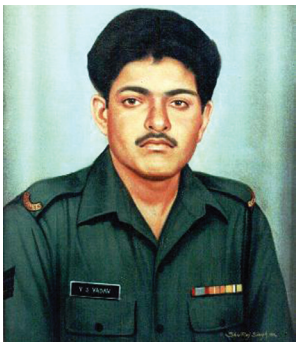
Yogender Singh Yadav



Hit by a grenade in the knee, another on the forehead with fifteen bullets in his body and not able to stand, he promised himself that he would not die…

This is not a scene from a thriller, but a real life incident experienced by Grenadier Yogender Singh Yadav. While playing a major role in 'Operation Vijay' he initiated the capturing of an army post in the Mushkoh valley. Although hard to believe that such a man could be real, Grenadier Yogender Singh Yadav, a living legend of the Indian Army, was honoured with the highest gallantry award, the Param Vir Chakra on 26 January 2000 for his high-spirited actions in the Kargil Conflict of 1999.

Yogender Singh Yadav was born on 10 May 1980 in a village of Aurangabad Ahir in Bulandshahr district of Uttar Pradesh. He completed his primary education at a village school and after Class V, went on to join Sannota Sri Krishna College in Bulandshahr. His father, Ram Karan Singh had served with 11 Kumaon as a soldier and had played an active role in the India-Pakistan Wars of 1965 and 1971. As Yogender and his brothers grew up, listening to the fascinating stories of valour and unmatched courage narrated by their father, they harboured dreams of joining the Army. His elder brother, Jitendra Singh Yadav was also recruited into the Indian Army. Yogender was destined to follow in the footsteps of his father and brother. He was recruited into the Grenadiers Regiment at the age of 16.

Yogender belonged to a blood line where bravery was ingrained. He created history by fighting for his country during the Kargil Conflict with phenomenal inspiration and death-defying courage.

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The Pakistani intruders had surreptitiously occupied positions on Tiger Hill, which was the highest peak of the Dras sector in Ladakh region. This facilitated them with a commanding view of the Srinagar-Leh National Highway 1A. Tiger Hill was the pivotal post on which the intruders' defences in the Dras sub-sector were based. Firmly placed here, they directed accurate artillery fire onto large tracts of the NH 1A. Hence, it was a matter of prime concern for the Indian Army to evict the enemy from this area. After the recapture of the Tololing peak and the adjacent features, ousting the enemy from this well-fortified mountain was a must.

The Ghatak Platoon

Yogender's Ghatak Platoon was assigned the arduous task of capturing the 'Three Bunkers'. He realised it was time to prove his patriotic fervour and mettle. With a heart pounding with the sense of responsibility, he eagerly volunteered to lead the attack by fixing the rope for his team to climb uphill. Meanwhile, heavy onslaught from the enemy almost stalled their advance, leading to the killing of his Commander and two teammates. Yogender, too, was wounded severely, but possessing a resolution as strong as his body, he continued to climb towards the enemy positions, ending up in a man-to-man combat with the enemy. Despite numerous bullet injuries, his determination remained firm as a rock and refusing to retreat, he continued the assault on the Pakistani personnel. His ferocious and fearless act helped in neutralising the enemy's firing. This heroic deed of Yogender Singh Yadav further motivated the Platoon to capture Tiger Hill Top and thus, a great objective was achieved. Without the brave acts of Yogender Singh, Operation Tiger Hill would not have been successful. This decisive victory of India sealed the fate of Pakistan's Kargil misadventure. 8 Sikh and 18 Grenadiers won unit citations for the Battle of 'Tiger Hill'.

Grenadier Yogender Singh Yadav was honoured with the Param Vir Chakra for his extraordinary gallant act. He is the youngest recipient of this coveted award, so far. Initially, the Param

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Vir Chakra was announced posthumously, but later it was learnt that he was alive and recovering from injuries in a military hospital. It was his namesake, who had died in the mission.

Grenadier Yogender Singh Yadav receiving the Param Vir Chakra from the President of India, Shri K. R. Narayanan, at the Republic Day Parade in 2000

COAS, Gen V.P. Malik and CAS, Air Chief Marshal A.Y. Tipnis along with the troops and commanders during 'Operation Vijay' following the capture of Tiger Hill in Dras sector

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Citation

Grenadier Yogender Singh Yadav (2690572), 18 Grenadiers

Grenadier Yogender Singh Yadav was part of leading team of Ghatak Platoon tasked to capture Tiger Hill on night of 3-4 July 1999. The approach to the top, at a height of 16,500 feet, was steep, snow bound and rocky. He volunteered to be in the lead and fixed rope for his team to climb up, unmindful of the risk involved.

The enemy, on seeing his team approach the area top, opened intense automatic, grenade, rocket and artillery fire. His team commander and two of his colleagues fell to murderous enemy fire. The further advance of Ghatak Platoon was stalled. Knowing the gravity of the situation, he crawled up to the enemy position to silence it, but sustained multiple bullet injuries. Unmindful of his injuries and hail of enemy bullets, he continued towards the enemy positions and lobbed grenades inside; and fired from his weapon, killing four enemy soldiers in close combat and silenced the automatic fire.

During the charge, he again sustained multiple bullet injuries but refused to be evacuated even in critical condition. Inspired by his gallant act, the rest of the Ghatak Platoon charged on to the other positions, and captured Tiger Hill Top, a National Objective.

Grenadier Yogender Singh Yadav, thus, displayed most conspicuous courage, indomitable spirit, grit and determination under extreme difficult situation beyond the call of duty.

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Sanjay Kumar

Killed five enemy personnel, lifted a machine gun despite three bullets in his leg and two in his hip, hurled a grenade and cleared an important army post…

These lines describe the supreme valour of Rifleman Sanjay Kumar of the 13 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles (JAK Rif.), a war hero of 'Operation Vijay'.

Born on 3 March 1976 in village Kalol Bakain of Bilaspur district of Himachal Pradesh, Sanjay Kumar was the youngest in his family of three sisters and two brothers. He passed his 10th Class from Senior Secondary School, Kalol. The war stories of his *chacha* (paternal uncle), who had fought against the Pakistanis in the 1965 India-Pakistan war, and heroic deeds narrated by the villagers who had been in the army, spurred him on to join the Armed Forces.

Hence, aspiring to be a hero, the soft-spoken but determined Sanjay Kumar started making inquiries so as to pursue his dreams after his matriculation. He came to Delhi and with this aim started his career as a driver. Even after two unsuccessful attempts to join the army, he did not lose heart and went on to attempt it for the third time. He finally came out successful in 1996 and got enrolled into the 13th Battalion of JAK Rifles as a soldier. Within a short span of time, Sanjay made his family and the nation proud, by demonstrating extraordinary courage and grit during the Kargil Conflict. Sanjay Kumar had earlier proved his worth, when his regiment was deployed in Sopore in Jammu and Kashmir, where he took part in the anti-insurgency operations, taking the militants head on. When the hostilities in Kargil broke out in 1999,

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he was amongst those sent to fight in Dras and Mushkoh valley. Rifleman Sanjay Kumar emerged as a real hero who displayed extraordinary grit and dauntless spirit during this war and contributed significantly towards the recapture of Area Flat Top.

On 4 July 1999, Rifleman Sanjay Kumar, along with other members of the Charlie Company, was ordered to clear area Flat Top of Point 4875 in the Mushkoh valley. Sanjay perceived that the attack had to be a severe one, since the post was well held by the intruders, with remote chances of anyone returning alive. Almost on a suicidal mission, Rifleman Sanjay Kumar volunteered to be the leading scout of the attacking column. He knew very well that he might not see the next day. But he also realised that even if he died, it wouldn't undermine the victory. Leading by example, he was assured that victory would definitely be theirs.

As the column proceeded, heavy firing from the enemy *sangar* (fortification) almost stalled the advance. Surging ahead dauntlessly with his rifle, Sanjay continued his assault at the enemy *sangar*, soon engaging in a hand-to-hand combat which finally led to the clearance of one *sangar*.

In no time, three bullets hit his leg. Fearlessly, he kept on advancing further. He fiercely attacked the enemy *sangar*, bringing down some more. Finally, against all odds, they were able to capture Point 4875. Sanjay refused to be evacuated and in constant vigil kept up his volley of shots till the post was absolutely cleared.

For his constant manifestation of tenacity and fearless action in the face of the enemy, Rifleman Sanjay Kumar was honoured with the Param Vir Chakra, India's highest medal for gallantry. With a well deserved promotion to Naib Subedar, Sanjay Kumar became a Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) of the Indian Army on 2 July 2014.

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Rifleman Sanjay Kumar receiving the Param Vir Chakra from the President of India, Shri K. R. Narayanan, at the Republic Day Parade in 2000

The tableau 'Operation Vijay' depicting the Kargil conflict on the Rajpath in New Delhi on 26 January 2000

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Citation

Rifleman Sanjay Kumar (13760533), 13 Jammu & Kashmir Rifles

Rifleman Sanjay Kumar volunteered to be the leading scout of the attacking column tasked to capture area Flat Top of Point 4875 in the Mushkoh valley on 4 July 1999.

As the attack progressed, enemy automatic fire from one of the *sangars* posed stiff opposition, thereby stalling the column. Rifleman Sanjay Kumar, realising the gravity of the situation, displayed indomitable spirit and unadulterated courage when he charged the enemy *sangar* with utter disregard to personal safety. In the ensuing hand-to-hand combat, he killed three of the intruders and was himself seriously injured. Despite being injured, he charged on to the second *sangar*. The enemy was taken totally by surprise and they left behind one universal machine gun and started running. Rifleman Sanjay Kumar picked up the weapon left behind by the enemy and killed the fleeing enemy. Although Rifleman Sanjay Kumar was profusely bleeding from his wounds he refused to be evacuated. This super-human act of Rifleman Sanjay Kumar motivated his comrades, who took no notice of the treacherous terrain and charged on to the enemy thus wresting the area Flat Top from the hands of the enemy.

Rifleman Sanjay Kumar, thus, displayed most conspicuous and extraordinary gallantry, cool courage and devotion to duty of an exceptionally high order in the face of the enemy.

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Vikram Batra

You may have read many tales of valour but nothing can match the sacrifices of martyrs and soldiers, who willingly put their nation, its citizens, above all. Their love and concern for the countrymen and unfazed belief in themselves being the harbingers of peace and patriotism, is commendable. The sacrifice they make is unimaginable for a civilian who is just an audience to war news. Vikram Batra wasn't just a soldier, he was the 'more' of his victory slogan *'Ye dil maange more!'* Vikram Batra was a passionate patriot and victories gave him a high.

Vikram Batra was born on 9 September 1974 to Shri G. L. Batra and Smt Jai Kamal Batra and brought up in the hills of Himachal Pradesh. Vikram Batra completed his schooling from D.A.V. Public School, Palampur and Kendriya Vidyalaya, Palampur.

It was in his college days at D.A.V. Chandigarh that Vikram Batra's life took a definitive turn leading him to be a part of the defence forces. He became a recipient of the Best Cadet of N.C.C. (Air Wing) in North Zone during the course of his B.Sc. degree. Soon, he was ready to join the Merchant Navy, with his uniform stitched and tickets booked, but at the very last minute changed his mind and decided to join the Indian Army. He was commissioned in the Indian Army as a Lieutenant of the 13 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles (JAK Rif.) and his first posting was at Sopore in the Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir.

13 JAK Rifles had completed its counter-insurgency operations tenure in Sopore, Kashmir, and was on its way to Shahjahanpur. It was recalled, as hostilities had broken out in Kargil. This regiment was asked to reach Dras on 12 June 1999 as reserve to 18 Grenadiers for the capture of Tololing. After capturing Tololing on 17 June,

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the next task for 13 JAK Rifles was the capture of Point 5140, at an approximate height of 15,000 feet above the sea level. This peak was one of the most treacherous and crucial peaks in the Dras region. Here, the Pakistani intruders had taken their positions in bunkers. The dare devilish task to recapture this Point was given to Lt Vikram Batra of Delta Company and Lt Sanjeev Jamwal of Bravo Company.

The gigantic task was to climb up the hill. All were aware that reaching the top of the feature would be very challenging, as the enemy was bringing down regularly very effective artillery fire on the assaulting troops. True to the proverb, 'when the going gets tough, the tough gets going', both Companies continued to climb up against all odds. With a strategy in hand, Vikram Batra decided to lead his men from the opposite side of the enemy, so as to surprise them. This was necessary as an onslaught of intense firing started from the enemy's machine gun posts. Gushing ahead for a hand-to-hand combat, and flinging grenades at the infiltrators' gun posts, Vikram Batra and his team finally captured the peak. This brilliantly manned and planned operation was considered as one of the toughest campaigns in mountain warfare, which catapulted Vikram Batra, and his leadership attributes, to the national headlines. His triumph was flashed on television screens across the country. This moment of glory resulted in him being promoted to the rank of a Captain, on the battlefield itself. The most amazing part of this attack was that there was no casualty on the Indian side.

After all the valiant ordeals, Capt Vikram Batra craved for more such dare devilish actions and bringing home accolades. More was yet to come! Soon, 13 JAK Rifles was de-inducted from Dras sector and sent for operations in the Mushkoh valley for the capture of Point 4875. Having proved their worth and valour, Vikram's team was given the task to clear a narrow feature with steep sides, heavily guarded by the enemy. With the previous victory still fresh in mind, the enthused team intelligently engaged themselves in an effective combat but the heavy firing started to take its toll. Unwavered, Vikram kept attacking the enemy head on, killing five of them at point blank range. The early morning hours of sub-zero temperatures could not dampen the spirit of this brave soldier. Capt Batra, all charged up roared his battle cry '*Jai Mata*

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Capt Vikram Batra and others after winning back Pt.5140

Di!', attacked the enemy with full vigour, refusing to be stopped. It was while evacuating an injured soldier that he was shot at, fatally. He shifted aside his fellow soldier, saying, "*Tu bal-bachchedar hai, hat ja peeche!*" (You have children, get aside), and stood up to face the enemies. A shell ripped through his mid waist and he collapsed with the words '*Jai Mata Di!*' on his lips.

Capt Vikram Batra's sacrifice and heroic act prompted his company to advance further and capture the Ledge, which in turn enabled his battalion to regain its hold on Point 4875. For his gallant act, unmatched bravery and endurance, the Government of India honoured him with the country's highest gallantry award, the Param Vir Chakra and renamed Point 4875 as 'Capt Vikram Batra Top.'

In order to commemorate his sacrifice and spirit of camaraderie, the Indian Army has named various significant buildings and cantonments after him. A hall at Service Selection Centre, Allahabad has been named 'Vikram Batra Block', a residential area in the Jabalpur Cantonment is called 'Capt Vikram Batra Enclave' and the combined cadets' mess at the Indian Military Academy, Dehradun is named as 'Vikram Batra Mess', to name a few of them. During his

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last visit home, when one of his friends cautioned him to be careful in the war, he replied, "I'll either come back after raising the Indian flag in victory or return wrapped in it. But I'll come for sure." The life and deeds of this glorious martyr will always inspire successive generations.

The President, Shri K. R. Narayanan, presenting the Param Vir Chakra to the father of Capt Vikram Batra (Posthumous) at the Republic Day Parade in 2000

Vikram Batra Mess, Indian Military Academy

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Citation

Captain Vikram Batra
(IC-57556), 13 Jammu & Kashmir Rifles

In Dras sector, the enemy held strong fortified positions, heavily reinforced with automatic weapons, with treacherous approaches dominating Srinagar-Leh Road, the life-line of supplies to Leh.

On 20 June 1999, Captain Vikram Batra, Commander Delta Company, was tasked to attack Point 5140 during Operation Vijay. Captain Vikram Batra, with his company, skirted around the feature from the East and maintaining surprise reached within assaulting distance. The officer reorganised his column and motivated his men to physically assault the enemy positions. Leading his men from the front, the officer in a dare devil assault pounced on the enemy and killed four intruders in a hand-to-hand fight.

On 7 July 1999, in yet another operation in the area of Point 4875, the company of the officer was tasked to clear a narrow feature with sharp cuttings on either side; and heavily fortified enemy defences, that covered the only approach to it.

In order to speed up the operation, the officer decided to assault the enemy positions along a narrow ridge. Leading the assault, he engaged the enemy in a fierce hand-to-hand fight and killed five enemy soldiers at point blank range. In this action, Captain Batra sustained grevious injuries. Despite the serious injuries, he crawled towards the enemy and hurled grenades clearing the position. Leading from the front, he rallied his men and pressed on the attack and achieved a near impossible military task in the face of heavy enemy fire with utter disregard to personal safety. The officer, however, succumbed to his injuries.

Inspired by this display of extraordinary junior leadership, the troops fell upon the enemy with vengeance and annihilated them, finally capturing Point 4875.

Captain Vikram Batra, thus, displayed the most conspicuous personal bravery and junior leadership of the highest order in the face of enemy and made the supreme sacrifice in the highest traditions of the Army.

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Uniforms and Ranks in the Indian Army

Indian Army Rank Insignia : Officers

General | Lieutenant General | Major General | Brigadier | Colonel | Lieutenant Colonel | Major | Captain | Lieutenant

Indian Army Rank Insignia : JCOs/NCOs/Jawans

Subedar Major | Subedar | Naib Subedar | Regimental Havildar Major | Regimental Quarter Master Havildar | Company Havildar Major | Company Quarter Master Havildar | Havildar | Naik | Lance Naik

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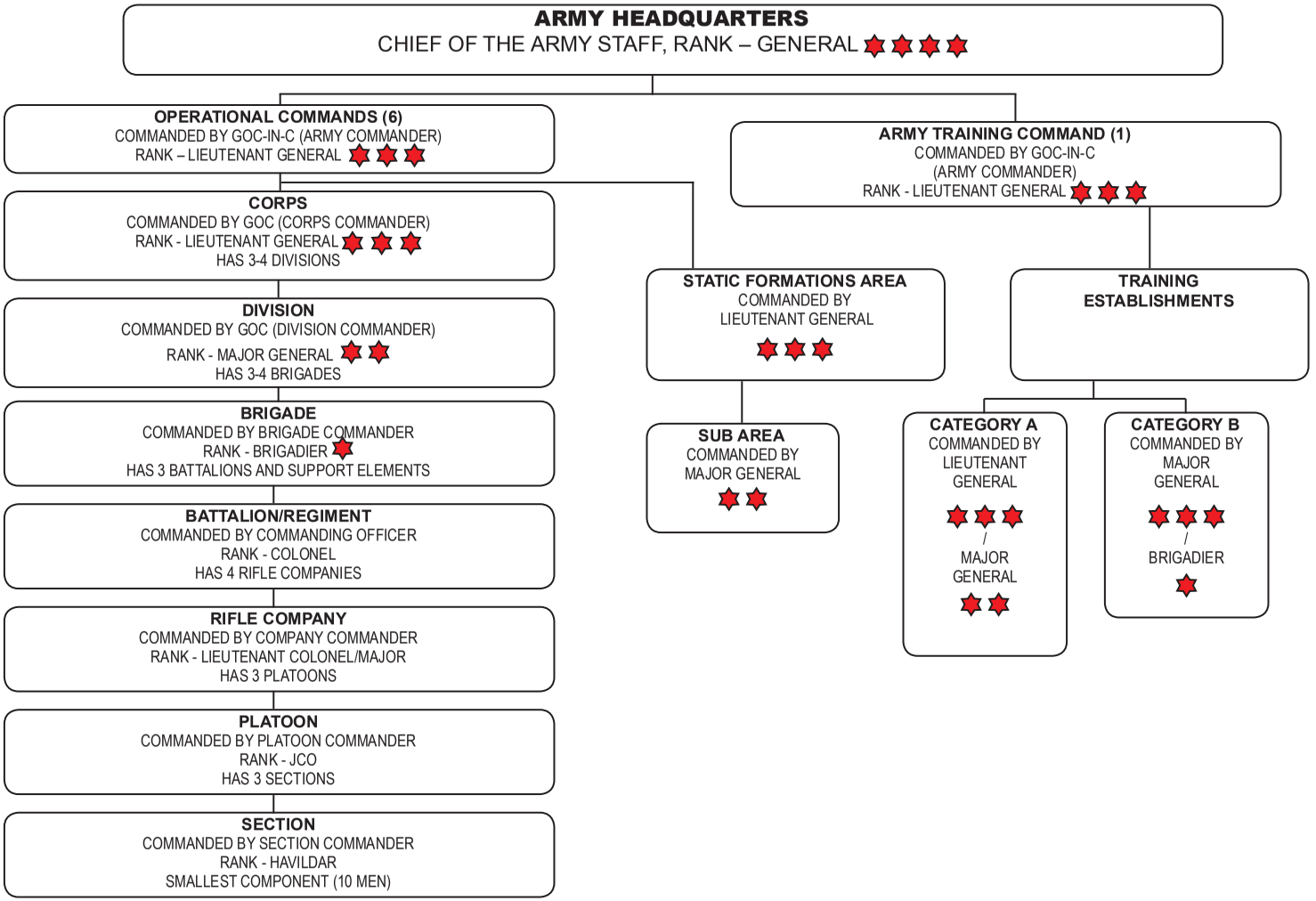
Structure of the Indian Army



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Order of Precedence

Notification No. 106-Pres/2004 – The President of India is pleased to notify the following Order of Precedence of wearing of various medals and decorations. This supersedes Notification No. 75-Pres/2001, dated the 26th May 2001.

1. Bharat Ratna
2. **Param Vir Chakra**
3. Ashoka Chakra
4. Padma Vibhushan
5. Padma Bhushan
6. Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medal
7. Param Vishisht Seva Medal
8. Maha Vir Chakra
9. Kirti Chakra
10. Padma Shri
11. Sarvottam Jeevan Raksha Padak
12. Uttam Yudh Seva Medal
13. Ati Vishisht Seva Medal
14. Vir Chakra
15. Shaurya Chakra
16. President's Police and Fire Services Medal for Gallantry
17. President's Police Medal for Gallantry
18. President's Fire Services Medal for Gallantry
19. President's Correctional Services Medal for Gallantry
20. President's Home Guards and Civil Defence Medal for Gallantry
21. Yudh Seva Medal
22. Sena/Nao Sena/Vayu Sena Medal
23. Vishisht Seva Medal
24. Police Medal for Gallantry
25. Fire Services Medal for Gallantry
26. Correctional Service Medal for Gallantry
27. Home Guards and Civil Defence Medal for Gallantry
28. Uttam Jeevan Raksha Padak
29. Parakram Padak
30. General Service Medal -1947
31. Samanya Seva Medal-1965
32. Special Service Medal
33. Samar Seva Star–1965

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34. Poorvi Star
35. Paschimi Star
36. Op Vijay Star
37. Siachen Glacier Medal
38. Raksha Medal-1965
39. Sangram Medal
40. Op Vijay Medal
41. Sainya Seva Medal
42. High Altitude Medal
43. Police (Antrik Suraksha Seva) Padak
44. Police (Special Duty) Medal - 1962
45. Videsh Seva Medal
46. President's Police and Fire Services Medal for distinguished Service
47. President's Police Medal for distinguished Service
48. President's Fire Services Medal for distinguished Service
49. President's Correctional Service Medal for distinguished Service
50. President's Home Guards and Civil Defence Medal for Distinguished Service
51. Meritorious Service Medal
52. Long Service and Good Conduct Medal
53. Police Medal for Meritorious Service
54. Fire Services Medal for Meritorious Service
55. Correctional Service Medal for Meritorious Service
56. Home Guards and Civil Defence Medal Meritorious Service
57. Jeevan Raksha Padak
58. Territorial Army Decoration
59. Territorial Army Medal
60. Indian Independence Medal -1947
61. Independence Medal -1950
62. 50th Anniversary of Independence Medal
63. 25th Independence Anniversary Medal
64. 30 Years Long Service Medal
65. 20 Years Long Service Medal
66. 9 Years Long Service Medal
67. Commonwealth Awards
68. Other Awards

Source: http://indiannavy.nic.in/about-indian-navy/order-precedence-0

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Glossary of Military Terms

Ambush	The act of hiding and waiting for somebody and then launching a surprise attack on them from a concealed position
Ammunition	A supply of bullets and other arsenal to be fired from guns, rifles and other weapons
Armour	Military vehicles such as tanks (e.g., Patton, Centurion tanks)
Artillery	Large, heavy guns which are often moved on wheels (e.g., Bofors gun) and are capable for firing accurately over long distances
Automatic	A mechanism by which a gun/ rifle can fire bullets continuously as long as the trigger is pressed
Bayonet	A long, sharp knife that is fastened onto the end of a rifle and used as a weapon in battle
Bridgehead	A strong defensive position that an army has captured in enemy land across a major obstacle like a canal or a river, from which it can go forward or attack the enemy. It acts as a base for further operations.
Bunker	A strongly built shelter for soldiers or guns, usually underground
Ceasefire	A time when enemies agree to stop fighting, usually while a way is found to end the fighting permanently
Citation	An official statement about something special that somebody has done, especially about acts of courage in a war
Detachment	A group of soldiers, ships or guns sent away from a larger group, especially to do special duties
Dogfight	A fight between aircraft in which they fly around close to each other
Enemy	A country that you are fighting a war against
Garrison	A strong well-built place where soldiers are placed to defend it from attack by enemy or act as base for storing items required for war
Grenade	A small timed bomb that can be thrown by hand or fired from a rifle by Infantry Soldiers who fight on foot, usually used for destroying bunkers or bigger weapons

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Magazine	The part of a rifle that holds the bullets before they are fired
Mention-in-Despatches	This medal is awarded for distinguished and meritorious service in operational areas and acts of gallantry which are not of a sufficiently high order to warrant the grant of gallantry awards.
Mortar	A portable weapon that fires bombs and shells high into the air used by foot soldiers. Very useful against moving enemy/ soldiers in open area
Patrol	The act of examining different parts of a building/ area etc., to make sure that there is no trouble or crime, at times to sanitise the area and show presence as a dissuasive measure
Picket	A soldier or group of soldiers guarding a small military base
Post	The place where soldiers do their job, usually part of a picket or a garrison
Recoil	A sudden movement backwards, especially of a gun/ rifle when it is fired, usually used to reload the rifle with another round to be fired
Reinforcements	Extra soldiers who are sent to a place because more are needed
Shell	A metal case filled with explosive, to be fired from a large gun, usually mortar or artillery gun.
Shelling	The firing of shells from large guns on a specific place, with aim to inflict injury or cause damage
Strafe	To attack a place with bullets or bombs from an aircraft flying low
Trench	A long deep hole dug in the ground in which soldiers can be protected from enemy attacks and from where they fight
Unit	A group of people who work or live together, especially for a particular purpose, and are identified by common chain of command and common regimental history

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Audio-Visual Materials

Param Vir Chakra, TV series (1990) directed by Chetan Anand
Major Somnath Sharma, Episode 1
Naik Jadunath Singh, Episode 2
2nd Lt Rama Raghoba Rane, Episode 3
Lance Naik Karam Singh, Episode 4
Company Havildar Major Piru Singh Shekhawat, Episode 5
Captain Gurbachan Singh Salaria, Episode 6
Major Shaitan Singh, Episode 7
Major Hoshiar Singh, Episode 8
2nd Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, Episode 9
Company Quarter Master Havildar Abdul Hamid, Episode 10
Major Dhan Singh Thapa, Episode 11
Lance Naik Albert Ekka, Episode 12
Subedar Joginder Singh, Episode 13
Lieutenant-Colonel Ardeshir Burzorji Tarapore, Episode 14
Flying Officer Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon, Episode 15

Param Vir Chakra Awardees - Seema Prahari Tumhe Pranam
Audio series developed by CIET, NCERT, on Maj Somnath Sharma, CQMH Abdul Hamid, 2/Lt Arun Khetarpal, Naib Subedar Bana Singh, Capt Vikram Batra (epathshala.nic.in)

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- *Haqeeqat* (1964) directed by Chetan Anand, based on the battles in Ladakh during the India-China War of 1962
- *Hindustan Ki Kasam* (1973) directed by Chetan Anand, based on the role of the Indian Air Force during the India-Pakistan War of 1971
- *Border* (1997) directed by J.P. Dutta, based on the India-Pakistan War, 1971
- *Kannathil Muthamittal* (2002, Tamil) directed by Mani Ratnam, in the backdrop of the civil war in Sri Lanka
- *LOC Kargil* (2003) directed by J.P. Dutta, based on the Kargil conflict, 1999
- *Lakshya* (2004) directed by Farhan Akhtar, in the backdrop of the Kargil conflict
- *1971* (2007) directed by Amrit Sagar, based on a story of Prisoners of War after the 1971 war
- *Kurukshetra* (2008, Malayalam) directed by Major Ravi, based on the Battle of Tololing during the Kargil conflict
- *Madras Cafe* (2013) directed by Shoojit Sircar, about the conflict in Sri Lanka and India's role
- *Children of War: Nine Months to Freedom* (2014), directed by Mrityunjay Devrat, based on the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971

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Integrated Defence Staff	http://ids.nic.in/welcome.html

Tri Services Institutions

National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla, Pune, Maharashtra
http://nda.nic.in/index.html

Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), Wellington (Nilgiris), Tamil Nadu
http://www.dssc.gov.in/

College of Defence Management (CDM), Secunderabad, Telangana
http://cdm.ap.nic.in/

Educational Institutions

Rashtriya Indian Military College, Garhi Cantt, Dehradun, Uttarakhand
http://rimc.gov.in/rimcindex.aspx

Rashtriya Military Schools (Ajmer, Bangalore, Belgaum, Chail, Dholpur)
http://www.rashtriyamilitaryschools.in/index.html

UP Sainik School, Lucknow
http://www.upsainikschool.org/

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Andhra Pradesh (Korukonda, Kalikiri)
Assam (Goalpara)
Bihar (Nalanda, Gopalganj)
Chhattisgarh (Ambikapur)
Gujarat (Balachadi)
Haryana (Kunjpura, Rewari)
Himachal Pradesh (Sujanpur Tira)
Jammu & Kashmir (Nagrota)
Jharkhand (Tilaiya)
Karnataka (Bijapur, Kodagu)
Kerala (Kazhakoottam)
Madhya Pradesh (Rewa)
Maharashtra (Satara)
Manipur (Imphal)
Nagaland (Punglwa)
Odisha (Bhubaneswar)
Punjab (Kapurthala)
Rajasthan (Chittorgarh)
Tamil Nadu (Amaravathinagar)
Uttarakhand (Ghorakhal)
West Bengal (Purulia)

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Image credits

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Army Postal Service

Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research, United Service Institution of India

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Indian Military Academy

M.V.S.V. Prasad, NCERT

Maps of DR Congo and Sri Lanka
"Courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin"

National Defence Academy

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Photo Division, DPR, MoD

Poornima Thapa

Press Information Bureau

Raj Kumar Dahiya

Satnam Singh

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Vijay Seth, APS Special Cover (Capt G.S. Salaria)

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Select Commemorative Postage Stamps on Institutions of Education and Training

Institutions make individuals by moulding their character. The following institutions of education and training are among those which have played a decisive role in shaping the personality of some of the Param Vir Chakra Awardees and of so many others.

25 November 1973

10 December 1982

13 March 1997

27 June 1989

4 October 1997

19 February 1999

7 March 2013

15 December 2014

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Veer Gatha End Section.indd 140

(L to R) The three living PVC Awardees—Subedar Major & Honorary Captain Bana Singh, PVC (Retd), Subedar Yogender Singh Yadav, PVC and Naib Subedar Sanjay Kumar, PVC at the beginning of the Republic Day Parade on Rajpath in New Delhi on 26 January 2016

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PVC Awardees at a Glance

No.	Awardee	Date of Birth	Date of Award	Age	Awarded
1	Somnath Sharma	31 January 1923	3 November 1947	24	Posthumously
2	Jadunath Singh	21 November 1916	6 February 1948	31	Posthumously
3	Rama Raghoba Rane	26 June 1918	10 April 1948	29	In person
4	Piru Singh	20 May 1918	18 July 1948	30	Posthumously
5	Karam Singh	15 September 1915	13 October 1948	33	In person
6	Gurbachan Singh Salaria	29 November 1935	5 December 1961	26	Posthumously
7	Dhan Singh Thapa	10 April 1928	20 October 1962	34	In person
8	Joginder Singh	28 September 1921	23 October 1962	41	Posthumously
9	Shaitan Singh	1 December 1924	18 November 1962	37	Posthumously
10	Abdul Hamid	1 July 1933	10 September 1965	32	Posthumously
11	Ardeshir Burzorji Tarapore	18 August 1923	11 September 1965	42	Posthumously
12	Albert Ekka	27 December 1942	3 December 1971	29	Posthumously
13	Nirmal Jit Singh Sekhon	17 July 1945	14 December 1971	26	Posthumously
14	Arun Khetarpal	14 October 1950	16 December 1971	21	Posthumously
15	Hoshiar Singh	5 May 1936	17 December 1971	35	In person
16	Bana Singh	6 January 1949	23 June 1987	38	In person
17	Ramaswamy Parameswaran	13 September 1946	25 November 1987	41	Posthumously
18	Manoj Kumar Pandey	25 June 1975	2 July 1999	24	Posthumously
19	Yogender Singh Yadav	10 May 1980	3 July 1999	19	In person
20	Sanjay Kumar	3 March 1976	4 July 1999	23	In person
21	Vikram Batra	9 September 1974	7 July 1999	24	Posthumously

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"WHEN YOU GO HOME
TELL THEM OF US AND SAY,
FOR YOUR TOMORROW
WE GAVE OUR TODAY"

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